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First Instalment of a Grand New Serial

The Tiger of Batol

A STORY OF PERIL AND ADVENTURE IN THE CHINA SEAS

By Captain Richard Benson

CHAPTER I

THE MAN WITH THE BLACK BAG

"CLIVE DENHAM, what are you doing in Plymouth?"

Clive, who had been sheltering from a sharp shower under a shop awning at the corner of Dockyard Road, looked up with a startled expression upon his thin, keen face.

An alert-looking youngster of about his own age, seventeen, stood before him, with a smile twinkling in his merry blue eyes.

Clive drew a quick breath, and grasped the other's outstretched hand.

"I might ask you the same question, Austin, old chap. You're the last person I expected to run into down here."

"Why? You knew we lived in Cornwall."

"Yes, but somehow I didn't connect Cornwall with Plymouth."

"Machinery and mathematics are the only things you ever could connect up," laughed Austin, cheerily. "Cornwall is only just the other side of the Hamoaze, and I'm often in Plymouth. But as for you, I thought you were up in your father's works at Coventry."

"My father is dead," said Clive, quietly.

A quick expression of remorse crossed Austin's face.

"My dear chap, I'm awfully sorry. I ought to have noticed your black tie. When was it?"

"A month ago," said Clive.

"Are you going to carry on the works?" asked Austin.

"There are no works to carry on," replied Clive.

Then, seeing the other's look of astonishment, he went on:—

"My poor dad ruined himself with his experiments. He spent every penny on that new flying machine, and then he caught cold just before he'd finished it. He'd been overworking, and was in an awfully shaky state, and he got pneumonia, and it finished him inside a week."

"Hard luck!" said Chesney sympathetically. "Then you're at a loose end?"

"Very loose," said Clive, with a grim smile on his thin face. "I've got rather less than five pounds between me and the workhouse."

"Rot, man!" retorted Austin. "A chap with a head like yours can always get a job."

"It must be my hands that are at fault, then," replied Clive. "I've been trying everywhere for the past three weeks, and can't get taken on. I came down here to look up Captain Brereton, an old friend of my father's. He's skipper and part owner of a tramp steamer, the *Sphinx*. I hoped to cadge a passage to Australia, where I thought I might find a job."

"Are you going?"

"Worse luck! He's just sailed. And he won't be back for four months or more."

Austin gave a low whistle.

"That's bad," he said. "Look here, old chap, it's nearly one. Come and feed with me, and we'll talk things over. We'll go and have a blow-out at the 'Lockyer.'"

Clive hesitated. "I'm afraid——" he began.

"Afraid be blowed!" said Austin. "You're not going to be too proud to have lunch with your old school pal. Come on, or I'll call a taxi, and take you by force."

A very pleasant smile lighted up Clive's rather sad face.

"Bosh, man! I'm not proud in that way. Only my togs are hardly up to 'Lockyer' form." And he glanced down at his neat but almost threadbare blue serge.

"I don't care where we go, so long as we get a square feed," said Austin. "I'm as hungry as a hawk, for I breakfasted at seven. The rain has stopped. Come on."

Down around the Barbican in Plymouth lie some of the meanest streets to be found in any big town in the South of England. They are narrow, squalid, and dirty, and haunted by plenty of the bad characters who are always to be found in any big seaport.

The pirate crew leaped down on to the schooner's deck, and rushed forward. "All hands repel boarders!" yelled Heritage, and flung himself into the fight.

Austin, however, seemed to know his way, and struck up through an alley which was one degree worse than the road which they had just left. The rough cobbles streamed with muddy water, the windows of the tall houses which rose on either side were many of them broken, and the holes stuffed with dirty rags In the grey light of the raw autumn day the place had an indescribably squalid appearance.

Half-way up the alley, which rose steeply towards the main part of the town, there passed them a thin, wiry-looking man of about forty years of age. He was carrying a small black bag, and walked with a slight limp.

The boys both noticed him because he was such a contrast to the ordinary inhabitants of this part of the town. His dark tweeds were well cut, his linen was white, and his brown boots perfectly polished. In spite of his slight lameness and his quiet attire, there was something distinguished about him. He was the sort to attract attention even in a crowd.

"A service man, I'll bet," said Austin, glancing after him. "Navy probably."

"I wonder what he's doing in this beastly slum," said Clive.

Austin shrugged his broad shoulders.

"May have got a yacht down in the Cattewater," he said. And then, with a sudden change of tone, "Hulloa, that chap's following him!"

Out of a dark archway had glided a most villainous-looking loafer — a squat, beetle-browed blackguard, dressed in greasy overalls and an old brown fisherman's jersey. His cap was pulled well down over his forehead, but failed to hide as vicious a face as either of the two boys had ever set eyes on.

"I believe you're right," replied Clive, in a low tone. "Keep moving, Austin. Don't let him see you're looking at him."

The two walked slowly on, but each keeping the tail of his eye on the loafer, who had quickened his pace, and was keeping about twenty yards behind the man with the black bag.

Austin pinched Clive's arm.

"There's another," he said, in a sharp whisper. "See—coming out of that turning on the other side of the street."

Clive glanced quickly round.

The new arrival on the scene was not quite so repulsive-looking as the first man, but appeared every bit as dangerous. He was a foreigner, and by his yellow-brown face and high cheek-bones apparently from the Far East.

He was dressed in ordinary seaman's kit, but in spite of his rough garb and heavy boots there was something suggestive of a panther in his soft, swift step and agile movements.

As he came out of the turning he gave one quick glance at the man with the black bag, then, keeping on his own side of the street, followed the other two.

"There's not a doubt about it," said Austin Chesney; "both those men are after him. I don't half like the look of it."

"More do I," said Clive. "I vote we turn and follow them."

"Just what I was going to suggest," replied Austin, quietly. And, suiting the action to the word, he turned, and the two began to walk quickly, but as quietly as possible, down hill behind the other three.

The first ruffian quickened his pace, and, catching up the lame man, passed him.

"False alarm, after all," muttered Austin.

"Don't you be too sure," replied Clive.

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the foreigner broke into a sharp run, and coming up behind the lame man with surprising speed and silence snatched the bag out of his hand, and bolted straight on down the alley as hard as he could leg.

With a cry of rage the lame man started in pursuit, and it astonished the boys to see how fast he could travel in spite of his limp.

But now the beetle-browed fellow took a hand, or rather a foot, in the game.

As the lame man came opposite he thrust out one leg and tripped him, sending him sprawling on hands and knees on the slimy cobbles. Then he darted off at top speed after his confederate.

By this time the boys were both running hard in pursuit. They did not wait to pick up the lame man, but as they dashed past Austin shouted:—

"Don't worry. We'll get your bag back."

The fellow who had tripped the lame man heard Austin, turned his head, saw the two boys in full chase, and redoubled his pace. At the same time he gave his accomplice a warning shout.

Austin and Clive were both pretty fast, and they gained on him hand over fist. Within fifty yards they were almost level.

Suddenly the ruffian swung round, and turned on them, brandishing a sheath-knife.

"Get back!" he cried, with a horrible threat. "Get back, or I'll do for you!"

Austin had a heavy walking-stick. Without

checking at all, he ran straight at the fellow, and with a sweeping blow caught him clean across the knuckles.

A howl of pain escaped him, and the knife flew from his numbed fingers, and spun tinkling across the cobbles.

"Get on, Clive, and catch the other chap," shouted Austin. "I can tackle this beggar."

With one glance behind him Clive sped on.

Mad with rage, the burly ruffian hurled himself at Austin, and attempted to kick him in the stomach.

It was the most foolish thing that he could possibly have done, for Austin had not been five years at a big public school and the rest of his life among Cornish mines without learning how to defend himself in any kind of rough and tumble.

Like a flash he stooped and seized the man's upraised foot in both hands, and gave it a quick hoist. The natural result was that his assailant flew bodily into the air, and that the first portion of his weighty person which again reached firm ground was the back of his head.

His skull met the pavement with such a crack that he simply flattened out, and lay as limp as a rag doll. It would be a good many hours before he would take any further interest in black bags or other such important matters.

"Well done, my lad!" came a shout from behind, but Austin did not even turn his head. Leaving the ruffian where he lay, he was off as hard as he could run after Clive and the foreigner.

He was just in time to see the latter whirl to the left through an archway, and Clive, turning so sharply that he had to catch the masonry at the edge to steady himself, follow at equal speed.

The ugly thought flashed across him that the foreigner was certain to be armed, and might lie in wait round the corner, and put his knife into Clive as he came up.

He spurted for all he was worth, but when he got into the narrow court which ran up from the archway his fears were not realised.

Clive and the foreigner both had totally disappeared.

He stared round. There was not a soul in the place, and the dirty windows set in the tall walls on either hand seemed to mock him with their silence and emptiness.

CHAPTER II

ACROSS THE ROOF-TOPS

"CLIVE!" he shouted at the top of his voice.

To his great relief Clive's voice answered: "Here, Austin. Second door on the right." And there was his chum looking out of a first-floor window.

Austin did not wait to ask questions. He dashed in through the door into an empty, boarded passage, and up a steep, narrow flight of bare, dirty stairs.

Clive was now a landing higher. He looked back as Austin came clattering up.

"I've treed him," he cried, breathlessly. "He's gone right up to the top. Come along. We'll collar him somewhere up in the attics."

"I heard a door slam up at the top," said Clive, quickly, as Austin joined him. "He's trapped all right."

"I doubt it," answered Austin, as side by side they raced up the last flight leading to the top floor.

Here was a long passage with four doors opening out from it, two on each side. By the rotten state of the flooring, and the thick damp and mildew on the crumbling plaster of the walls, it was plain that the house had been long uninhabited.

Austin flung open the doors one by one. Three yielded at first touch, but the fourth was fastened from the inside.

"Here's where he is," said Clive, his thin face blazing with excitement. Austin hardly knew him for the quiet, melancholy looking fellow whom he had met barely half an hour before. "We must burst the door in."

"Shoulders to it," said Austin in a quieter tone. "And look out for his knife if we get through."

Stepping back a few paces they made a rush, and both together drove their shoulders against the door.

It was quite rotten, and under their combined weight went all to flinders, and they landed inside the room on their hands and knees in a cloud of dust and splinters.

Heedless of cuts and scratches, they were both on their feet in an instant, but the room was as bare as the other three.

"The bird's flown," muttered Austin.

"And there's the door of his cage," answered Clive, pointing to a trap-door in the low-browed, sloping roof.

There was a broken chair beneath it, and

The foreigner deliberately let himself down off the roof, and hung with his hands gripping the gutter. Austin determined to follow him.

Austin was up on this in an instant, and had got both hands against the door.

To his surprise it was not fastened, and flew open easily. They found afterwards that the staple which held the bolt was rusted through.

Austin swung himself actively up, and Clive, who was thoroughly roused, followed.

"There he is!" cried Austin, in triumph.

The foreigner had slid down the slates at the back of the house, and was clambering steadily along the edge, his feet in the gutter and his body sprawled out along the sloping roof. The black bag was slung by a piece of cord around his neck, and hung across his back.

He saw the boys emerge upon the roof, and his thin lips drew back in a wolf-like snarl.

Clive glanced at the steeply sloping roof, and the great depth below the eaves. It was at least a fifty-foot drop.

"He's done us," he said, bitterly. "The chap's a sailor, and we can never follow him."

"Not follow him?" answered Austin, in surprise. "Why not?"

Then, catching the look in Clive's face, "You stay here," he said. "I'm accustomed to this sort of game. I'll fix him all right."

Young Chesney's father was owner of a big Cornish tin-mine, and the boy had been accustomed, almost since he could walk, to clambering about the old shafts and winzes. Height had no terrors for his seasoned head, and without hesitation he pulled off his boots, and in stockinged feet let himself slide quietly down the slope of the roof until he reached the gutter.

Then, getting his feet into the narrow iron trough, he began working his way steadily along in pursuit of the thief.

Clive Denham, watching breathlessly from the mouth of the trap-door, saw the confident look on the Easterner's face hange to terror as he saw that his pursuer was as good a climber

as himself, and watched him quicken his pace. The house they were in was the last but one in the row, and the gutter ran straight onwards to the end of the next roof.

What there was beyond Clive could not see. Apparently a sheer drop into some open space. What would happen when the fugitive reached the end he could not imagine.

No more, for that matter, could Austin. He saw even more plainly than Clive that there appeared no way of escape for the thief. But at the same time he was equally at a loss how to tackle him, now that he had got him cornered.

Neither of them would be able to use their hands, so all he could do would be to keep his position and wait until help came.

He looked up.

"Clive," he cried, "go and fetch a bobby. And tell him to bring some rope. We shall have to lasso this beauty from the ridge of the roof."

The foreigner uttered an exclamation of fury in a language unknown to Austin. It sounded rather like the spitting of an angry cat. But all the time he kept on moving slowly but steadily along the gutter.

As he neared the extreme end he suddenly quickened his pace. Why he did so Austin could not at first conceive. But he very soon understood.

Reaching the extreme corner, the foreigner turned to Austin, and made a gesture of derision, at the same time hissing out some insulting words.

Then he deliberately let himself down off the roof, and hung with his hands gripping the gutter.

For a moment Austin fancied the fellow must have gone mad. He himself, flattened out across the slates, could not see the object of the thief's manœuvre.

Clinging with his yellow, claw-like fingers to the edge of the gutter, the latter swung a moment, then his head slipped slowly over the edge, his hands let go, and he vanished from Austin's sight.

At last Austin understood. A rain-pipe ran down at the angle of the wall, and was stapled far enough out from the brickwork to give plenty of hand-hold. Down this the agile Easterner was clambering with the ease and assurance of a monkey.

Austin felt rather like a dog that suddenly sees its bone snatched away from in front of it. But he was one of the sort who are not easily defeated. He was not going back to the lame man without his bag—if it were in any way possible to regain it.

If the downfall pipe would bear the other chap it would bear him, and it was quicker to follow him that way than to climb back into the house. Indeed, he was more than doubtful whether he could manage to return up that steep slope of smooth slates.

Austin hurried as quickly as possible to the corner, and, glancing over, saw the other nearly half-way down. Deliberately he swung off, and, gripping the pipe between his knees, followed.

Now he blessed the forethought which had caused him to take off his boots before he started. With his bare feet he got a far better grip on the pipe than was possible to the thief, and he slid down at a great rate, gaining rapidly on the other, who, active as he was, was hampered by his heavy footgear.

Even so the foreign gentleman had such a big start that it was doubtful whether he would overtake him before he reached the bottom.

Glancing down, Austin saw that the pipe ended in a yard, or garden, small but very neatly kept. There were plants in pots and a small arbour covered with creepers.

He was still quite ten feet from the ground when he realised that the other had reached the bottom. Another moment and he would be out of reach. Without stopping to think Austin let go, and came crashing down right on the thief's head, knocking him flat and falling on top of him.

The shock almost stunned Austin, and he rolled over on the hard gravel, and lay there with all the wind knocked out of him, helpless as a baby.

The Oriental staggered to his feet. His face was absolutely fiendish. He drew his knife from the sheath at his belt, and swooped down upon Austin like a hawk stooping at its prey.

Another moment and the gleaming steel would have been buried in Austin's side, when, with a roar like that of a small lion, a large brindled bull-terrier came galloping across the little garden, and buried a fine set of shining white teeth in the calf of the Oriental's leg.

With a yell of pain and fright he turned and made a wild stab at the dog. But as he swung round so did the dog, and the knife-blade wasted its force on thin air.

"Ah, would ye?" came a voice which put the bull-terrier's to shame. "Ye murtherin' thief! I'll tache ye to thry them sort o' tricks! Stick Chump, is it? Begorra, I'll carve ye into cat's-mate before I'm through wid ye!"

And the new comer, a burly Irishman with

fiery red hair and a forty-five inch chest, seized the Easterner by the scruff of the neck with one huge fist, and with the other snatched his knife from him, and sent it whirling over the wall into the next yard.

With a snarl the brown man twisted himself round, and buried his teeth in the other's wrist.

A clout on the side of the head that nearly stunned him was his reward.

"Ah, ye'd dine off me, would ye, ye dirty cannibal? Begorra, I'll give ye something to drink wid it!"

And swinging the vicious little scoundrel clean off his feet he lifted him high into the air, and, stepping across to the water-butt, deliberately dropped him into four feet of almost ice-cold rain-water.

"Steady on! You'll drown him," exclaimed Austin, who had got his wind back, and had struggled to his feet.

"Faith, and a good job too! If every Malay in Plymouth—aye, and in the Islands, too—was drowned 'twould be no loss. But ye needn't worry, mister—there's his head stickin' out, for all the world like a monkey's from a cage."

"Stay where ye are till I'm ready to attend further to ye," he continued, shaking his ponderous fist at the miserable thief, whose face was livid with cold, while his teeth were chattering like Spanish castanets. "Watch him, Chump."

The bull-terrier uttered a thunderous growl, and took up a strategic position close under the barrel, and for the life of him Austin couldn't help laughing at the brown man's expression of abject terror and misery.

"And now," said the big Irishman, turning to Austin, "I'd be mighty obliged if ye'd tell me the reason of this unexpected call ye've made on Terence O'Rourke. That's my name, and yonder's my house."

Austin quickly put his new acquaintance in possession of the main facts of the case, and O'Rourke nodded his big head in vigorous approval.

"Begorra, young sir, ye've done mighty well," he declared. "Then I'm thinking this will be what ye might call the bone o' contention," as he picked up the black bag, the string of which had been broken when Austin dropped on the thief.

At this moment the back door of the house burst open with a crash, and the lame man, followed closely by Clive Denham, hurried out into the little garden.

"Be jabers, but 'tis a lot o' callers I'm getting this day!" said O'Rourke, showing a fine set of teeth in a wide and cheerful grin.

CHAPTER III

WHAT THE BLACK BAG HELD

"WE'VE got the bag all right, sir," said Austin, taking it from O'Rourke, and holding it up.

Its owner literally snatched it from the boy's hand, and, pressing a knob in the metal top, opened it and looked inside.

"They're all right," he said, with a deep gasp of relief. "Forgive my rudeness; but you can hardly realise what it would have meant to me if those scoundrels had got away with my pearls. I can't tell you how grateful I am to you and your friend, and to this gentleman," turning to O'Rourke.

The latter had been staring at the owner of the bag with a puzzled look in his china-blue eyes. All of a sudden he gave a sort of muffled bellow.

"Sure, it's Captain Heritage!" he roared. "If it isn't I'll ate that bag, pearls and all."

For a moment the lame man stared at the huge Irishman. Then a light of recognition broke upon his face.

"Terence O'Rourke!" he cried, and thrust out his hand, which was instantly swallowed in O'Rourke's immense fist.

"And what is it you're doing in Plymouth, captain dear?" asked O'Rourke, pump-handling vigorously.

"That's much too big a question to be answered all in a minute," replied Heritage, with a pleasant twinkle in his keen grey eyes. "I'll expound later on. See here, have any of you lunched yet?"

"We were just on our way to feed, sir, when we met you," said Austin.

"Then if you'll be so good, you'll all three come and lunch with me, and I'll tell you the story of the contents of this bag. But I don't as yet even know the names of you and your friend. Mine is John Heritage, late of His Majesty's Navy."

Austin introduced himself and Clive.

"Hadn't we better hand that foreign gentleman over to the police before we do anything else?" suggested Clive, with a glance at the shivering occupant of the water-tub.

Heritage hesitated.

"If I do," he said, in a low voice, so that

the fellow should not hear, "he is sure to be committed for the assizes. And we shall all four have to appear as witnesses. I don't know what your plans are, but long before that date I expect to be some thousands of miles away. Under the circumstances I think my only course is to let him go."

"Faith, I'd sooner let a mad dog loose," said O'Rourke.

"I know that it doesn't seem right," said Heritage in his quiet, even tones, "but it is utterly impossible for me to remain in England a day longer than is absolutely necessary. Every twenty-four hours' delay may mean hundreds, even thousands of pounds out of my pocket."

The boys and O'Rourke stared. What enterprise could this quiet-looking, lame, middle-aged man possibly be engaged in which had such tremendous issues? Yet it was a testimonial to his force of character that not one of them so much as dreamed of doubting the truth of what he had stated.

"Why wouldn't I drown him?" suggested O'Rourke, coolly. "I'm not thinking that anyone would miss him."

"My good O'Rourke, we're in England, not in the islands," replied Heritage, smiling. "Take him out, and I'll say a word or two to him before we turn him loose."

O'Rourke strode over to the water-butt, took the miserable Malay by the scruff of the neck, lifted him out as easily as though he had been a kitten, and, carrying him across to where the captain stood, dumped him down as unceremoniously as a sack of coals.

The man's face was the colour of an unripe banana, his teeth chattered incessantly, yet there was a look in his dark eyes which unpleasantly reminded Austin of one of the poisonous adders which he had so often run across on the sunny Cornish moors.

"What's your name?" demanded Heritage, and there was a crisp quality in his voice which was new to the boys.

"Kwala," muttered the man, unwillingly.

"Speak out!" ordered Heritage, sharply. "You are a Malay?"

"Yes."

"From Pahang?"

A gleam of surprise crossed the man's face, but he assented.

Heritage suddenly switched off into a language unknown to the boys, but which Austin recognised as the same quick, spitting tongue as that which Kwala himself had used on the roof.

The Malay's face betrayed surprise and fright.

Heritage gave him what was evidently a tremendous dressing down, and the Malay made no answer.

"Now you can turn him loose," said Heritage to O'Rourke. "I've told him plainly that if he ever dares meddle again with any of us four no mercy will be shown him."

"Begor, I'll show him the same mercy I would to a karaib,* neither more nor less," said O'Rourke, grimly.

And seizing the fellow by the collar, he ran him through the house, and the boys following were just in time to see the Irishman's immense boot lift the little reptile half-way across the street, sending him sprawling in the mud.

He picked himself up and looked round. He said nothing, but there was that in his face which made both Austin and Clive shiver in spite of themselves.

"We'll have trouble with Mr. Kwala before we're through," said Austin.

"He doesn't look the sort to forget very easily," answered Clive.

"Forget him," said Heritage. "And come along to lunch, all three of you."

Heritage called a cab and drove them, not to the "Lockyer," but to a well-known restaurant at the top of George Street, where he ordered a private room. The condition of Austin's garments after his climb across the roof made it impossible for him to feed in the main room.

While they waited for lunch Heritage telephoned to a tailor, and gave him directions to bring over a selection of ready-made clothes suitable for a young fellow of Chesney's build.

"It's the very least I can do for you," he laughed, when Austin remonstrated. "Now don't talk, but do as you're told."

Five minutes later they all four sat down to a meal which was not only one of the best which they had ever eaten, but was destined to have an enormous effect upon the lives and fortunes of host as well as guests.

"I'll keep the story of my pearls until we've finished," said Heritage, as he carved a fine sole. "But first of all, O'Rourke, I want to know how you come to be in Plymouth."

"Well, sorr, it was this way," explained the big Irishman. "After I was wid ye in the *Albatross* I came to Plymouth here to see me ould Aunt Kate McKeown, who lived in that same house where ye found me. The crathur was sick and ould, and being a rough neigh-

* A deadly Indian snake always killed on sight.

bourhood, she wanted a man around the place. So the ind of it was she promised she'd lave me the place and all her little property if I'd give up the service and stay wid her. Three months later she died, and iver since I've lived there all alone barrin' Chump."

"And how do you like it?" asked Heritage, keenly.

"'Deed, sorr, there's times I weary for the say. And if it wasn't for a bit of a boat I have to go fishing in around the Sound and Whitsand Bay, I'm thinking I'd have let the house, and been off again a long while since."

"How would you like a trip to the Islands?" suggested Heritage, slyly.

"Wid you, sorr?"

"Yes, in my own ship."

"I'm your man, sorr. Begorra, 'tis too good to be true."

Joy beamed in his big face, and he snatched up his long glass of Devonshire cider.

"Here's luck to the trip, sorr; and it's mesilf would follow ye anywheres, whether it's to the Islands or the North Pole."

"Thank you, O'Rourke. I couldn't have a better testimonial, or a finer follower," said Heritage, gravely, as he clinked glasses with the Irishman.

The boys had listened eagerly.

"What are the 'Islands'?" asked Clive Denham.

"The South Sea Islands, my lad," replied Heritage. "The great archipelago of the Pacific. Sailors call them 'The Islands.' They are the most beautiful places in the whole world, but some are also the most dangerous and the most wicked. But one and all have the most amazing charm and fascination. The man who once gets the sandal-wood scent in his nostrils is always irresistibly drawn back to the hibiscus thickets and the palms, and the blue Pacific breakers crashing on the coral reefs."

"And that's where pearls come from?" said Austin.

Heritage nodded.

"Quite true, Chesney. As soon as lunch is over you shall hear all about it."

An excellent fruit tart served with yellow clotted Devonshire cream was the last dish, and when they had all done justice to it the captain rang for coffee, and they pulled their chairs around the fire.

The autumn afternoon was cold and dull,

and the bright flame of old ships' timber was cheery and comforting.

When the waiter had left the room, Captain Heritage opened his bag and took from it a roll of black cloth. Unfolding this, he laid it on the table, and then poured upon it from a wash-leather bag a shower of pearls of all sizes and shapes.

The boys gasped at their number and beauty. Against the black cloth the wonderful iridescence of these most exquisite gems showed up to perfection. Some were quite tiny, but others were the size of a large marrow-fat pea, and one or two almost as large as hazel-nuts.

Austin gripped the pipe between his knees, and, sliding down, gained rapidly on the thief.

In all there must have been more than two hundred.

"Beautiful things, aren't they?" said Heritage, running his thin brown fingers through them. "Our friend Kwala would have been rich for life if he had got away with that little lot. There must be over ten thousand pounds' worth on the table there."

He picked up three of the largest.

"I want you each to have one of these stones as a memento of what you have done for me to-day," he said, quietly.

"'Deed, and I won't take it, sorr," declared O'Rourke, stoutly. "I'm going wid ye where I'll find plenty for mesilf. Don't be asking me to take wan."

Heritage glanced at the man.

"All the same you'll take one, O'Rourke, and have it mounted as a pin at my expense. Do you see?"

And he pressed the beautiful gem into the Irishman's unwilling hand.

Then he gave one to each of the boys, and quickly cut short their thanks.

"It is I who am your debtor, not you mine," he said. "If I had lost my bag I should have lost more than any of you dream of. Not only my fortune, but my life's work, my honour itself."

His voice deepened, and his deep-set eyes glowed. Austin and Clive stared at him in wonder.

"I promised you the story," he went on. "I'll tell it you. But first, does my name recall anything to you?"

"Yes, sir," said Austin, promptly. "I've seen it in the papers. You were in command of the cruiser *Scylla* when she was wrecked and lost off Perim three years ago, weren't you?"

A painful flush stained Heritage's sun-tanned cheeks.

"You are right, Chesney. And as a result I was censured and placed on half-pay, and on half-pay I have remained ever since. The Admiralty never forgive a man who has blundered."

The boys said nothing. It was plain that words of sympathy would be idle.

"But I love the service," went on Heritage, in a ringing tone, "and I mean to get back if it is humanly possible. I think I can trust you to keep my confidence?"

"Av coorse ye can, captain," said O'Rourke, and the boys both nodded.

"So far as I can see," said Heritage, speaking slowly and impressively, "there is only one way of doing it. To restore to the nation a war vessel in every way equal to the lost *Scylla*."

The amazing character of this proposal literally staggered his three hearers. They sat silent, staring at him and one another.

"Ah, you think that I have a bee in my bonnet!" said Heritage, with a slight smile. "But I assure you that I am perfectly sane, and that I have stated no more than the exact truth when I tell you that it is my firm intention to carry out this plan."

"But a cruiser costs a fearful lot, sir," burst out Austin.

"A vessel equal to the *Scylla* can be built and fitted out for £750,000," replied Heritage, quietly. "And that is the least sum which I have set myself to make."

"Will it be out of pearls, captain?" asked O'Rourke, eagerly.

Heritage nodded. "Yes, out of pearls. And these"— pointing to the glittering gems strewn on the cloth — "are the first consignment. Let me explain. Some years ago I had the luck to do a good turn to a native of Formosa. His junk was in difficulties in a cyclone, and I got him and his people off just in time."

"Sure, and don't I remember it!" exclaimed O'Rourke. "I was wid ye at the time, captain, and 'twas nip and tuck for the whole lot of us."

Heritage smiled and went on.

"Well, Wun Sing was grateful, and it was he who told me of Sunshine Island, and the pearl lagoon. At the time the news had no particular interest for me, for I had a command, but when my trouble came Sunshine Island was the very first thing I thought of.

"I went out there, and fossicked about, and ascertained that Wun Sing's story was true, and then I applied to the Japanese Government and got a two years' lease. That was eight months ago, and I began work as soon as I could manage it, and there you see the results."

"But, captain dear, them won't buy a battleship," broke in O'Rourke.

"Have patience, O'Rourke," said Heritage. "I soon found that the diving dresses and equipment which I had hired at Hong Kong were nothing like sufficient to clean up the oysters in sight within the two years. So I have left a man in charge, and hurried straight home to sell these pearls, and with the money buy a seaworthy vessel

and proper outfit, with which I can do the job thoroughly."

"And ye want me wid ye, sorr ?" exclaimed O'Rourke.

"I couldn't have a more useful man if you care to take on the job," smiled Heritage.

"And begorra ye couldn't have found me a job I'd like betther," declared O'Rourke, joyfully. "Barrin' that I'm feared there won't be no fighting."

"No fighting," repeated Heritage, quietly. "I'll tell you what, O'Rourke, the chances are that you'll get more than you bargain for before we finish with this job."

"Is that so, sorr ?" said O'Rourke, his big face lighting up with the joy of a born fighter at the prospect of battle.

"It is so. And you'll understand the reason why when I tell you that the Black Flags have planted themselves on the neighbouring islands."

O'Rourke gave a low, musical whistle.

"The Black Flags !" he repeated. "Faith, they're the bhoys to fight ! 'Deed there'll be scrapping and to spare before we're finished wid them pirates !"

CHAPTER IV

THE SCHOONER "BRILLIANT"

CLIVE DENHAM, who had been listening with growing eagerness to the talk between Captain Heritage and O'Rourke, stood up suddenly.

"Captain Heritage," he said, and his voice quivered slightly with repressed excitement, "do you want volunteers ? If so, will you take me with you ?"

"And me, too ?" exclaimed Austin Chesney.

A startled look crossed the captain's face, but before he could answer Clive went on :—

"I'll go in any capacity. I'm no sailor, but I understand motor and other machinery. I know a good deal of practical mechanics, for I've been in a workshop ever since I left school. I honestly believe I could be useful in an expedition of this sort."

"I've no doubt you could," said Heritage. "But your people, my boy. What would they say ?"

"I have no people," answered Clive, with a touch of sadness. "I am quite alone in the world."

"Then I'll take you, and gladly," answered Heritage.

"And me ?" questioned Chesney, eagerly.

"Are you in the same position as your friend ?"

"No, sir, I am not. My father is still alive, and lives over near Trevurtha, in Cornwall. He owns a tin-mine, but a few weeks ago the water broke into it from some old workings, and flooded the whole place. It will cost more money than my father has got to pump it out, and he is at his wits' end what to do. When I met Denham this morning I had just been to our solicitors to ask them if there was any possibility of raising money, but they gave me no hope. It would be the greatest help to us if I could get work."

"I'm very sorry to hear of your misfortune," said Heritage. "But it is evidently my gain. A young fellow who could show the pluck and presence of mind which you showed in hunting down the thieves just now is exactly the sort I want for the work I am engaged in. If you can get your father's permission I shall be delighted to have you."

"Thanks awfully, sir," said Austin. "It's just the sort of work I'd choose before anything else. And, if I may say so, sir, you're the man I'd like best to go with."

"That's very nice of you," replied Heritage, with his rare smile.

And at that moment there was a knock at the door, and the waiter announced that the tailor was there with the suits that had been ordered.

"Good business," said Heritage, briskly. "And while you are about it, you two boys had better get your outfits. O'Rourke will be able to advise you exactly what you want. He knows those seas almost as well as I do. And now I'm off to meet the man who is to purchase my pearls. He is waiting for me at the 'Royal Hotel.' I shall find you here when I get back."

"Ye'll go in a cab, if ye plaze, captain," said O'Rourke, as Heritage gathered up the pearls. "Remember there's others besides Kwala as would like to relave ye of thim pretty stones."

"Don't you worry. I've had my lesson," said Heritage, as he left the room.

Then O'Rourke began to show his capabilities. He got to work at the telephone, and before the tailor had finished fitting Austin, there came tradesmen with stocks of shirts, and shoes, and dungaree overalls, and all sorts of clothes necessary for tropical wear.

And in spite of his jovial, devil-may-care manner, the big Irishman proved himself a shrewd hand at a bargain. He bought with a

promptness and decision which fairly dazzled the boys.

When Austin said so, O'Rourke laughed.

"Faith, I tell ye, ye'll have to get a hump on yourself if ye are to serve the captain. Begorra, but he'll open your eyes for ye before ye are much older."

When Heritage came back, two hours later, the boys' outfits and O'Rourke's were almost complete.

"I've done well with my pearls," said Heritage, cheerily. "Eleven thousand five hundred is what I've got for them. I see you've got your clothes. Now how about a ship, O'Rourke?"

"I thought ye'd be needing a craft of some kind, captain. So I took the liberty to telephone Welby & Co., and they'll be waiting for ye if ye'll come straight down. Have ye banked the money, sorr?"

"Yes. I was just in time to do so. And I've kept my taxi. Come, we'll all go together."

Ten minutes' swift run through the narrow Plymouth streets saw them at the shipbrokers, and Heritage rapidly explained to Mr. Welby the sort of craft he was in search of.

"As luck has it," said the shipbroker, who was a stout, pleasant-faced, bald-headed man, "there's a vessel that pretty well answers your description lying in the Cattewater this minute. She's the schooner *Brilliant*, about seven hundred tons, and has an auxiliary motor-engine. A fine, big, roomy boat, not very new, but well built and sound as a bell. She is very well found in all respects, and is the sort of craft you could start in to-morrow and sail round the world."

"A good sea-boat?"

"None better. I've been across to the Baltic in her myself, for she belongs to a friend of mine."

"Is she for sale or charter?"

"Either, but preferably for sale. Her owner has lost money, and can't afford to keep her any longer."

"Can I see her to-night?"

"It's rather late now, Captain Heritage. Couldn't you wait till morning?"

"No," said Heritage; "I haven't an hour, let alone a night, to spare."

"Very well. It's never too late in the day for me to do business. We'll go at once."

Mr. Welby had not exaggerated. The *Brilliant* appeared to be all that he had said she was. She was a stout-built craft with tall, raking masts. She looked clean and smart, and had any amount of room below her long, flush deck.

Heritage and O'Rourke were in their element. They explored every nook and corner, from the deck-house and galley to the hold.

Presently Heritage hailed Clive, and the latter, going below, found him examining the motor-engine.

"You know more about this than I do," said Heritage. "Overhaul it, and give me your opinion."

Clive flung off his coat, and plunged delightedly into the work. When Heritage came back half an hour later the boy was black grease to the eyes.

Heritage glanced at him approvingly.

"Well?" he said.

"First class," declared Clive. "A good, solid bit of work. Just wants a little overhauling, and this magneto requires taking down, and some new platinum points, and——"

"Steady on," said Heritage. "I'll leave all that to you. Get what you want, and charge it to me. This will be your department. I put you in complete control."

It was dark before Heritage finished his inspection. Then he turned to Mr. Welby.

"If the surveyor passes her I'll take her," he said. "Buy her outright."

Welby's cheery face beamed.

"You're the sort of customer I like, captain. She's as good as yours, for no surveyor can pick holes in her."

Heritage, too, had a pleased look as he and his party drove back together to their hotel.

"Not a bad day's work, O'Rourke," he observed.

"Sure there's not a Yankee in America can make things hum like you, captain," replied O'Rourke, heartily. "How soon do ye think we'll be able to get away?"

"I'll have the riggers at work to-morrow. All the running-gear must be overhauled. Then I must go to London for the diving-dresses, and I'll leave you to engage a crew. With any luck we ought to get off within a week."

O'Rourke nodded.

"It won't be my fault if we don't do it, sorr," he remarked, with decision.

CHAPTER V

THE FLOATING CASTLE

"I SAY, Clive, the sea seems to suit you," remarked Austin, as he strolled into the little engine-room, and found his chum in a suit of greasy overalls busy over his beloved motor.

Clive looked up. He was visibly fatter, and his face had quite lost its strained, anxious appearance.

"Work for a boss like ours ought to suit anyone," he answered, cheerily, as he balanced himself against the roll of the schooner, which was running close-hauled and dipping to a big head sea. "It was the biggest stroke of luck I ever had when I met him."

"Same here," said Austin. "I say, we're getting jolly near Sunshine Island. We're off the Paracels at this minute. With any luck we shall reach our destination by to-morrow night."

"Good business!" said Clive. "I'm keen as mustard to get among those pearls."

"So am I. But it's just on dinner-time. Go and wash, Clive, and come on deck."

Clive nodded, and five minutes later they met in the saloon, where the usual well-cooked meal was served by a Chinese steward in spotless white drill.

Captain Heritage was on the bridge, so O'Rourke took the head of the table.

"It's the last lap we're on, me bhoys," he said, rubbing his great hands together cheerily. "If the wind wud only shift a point or two aft, we'd be at the island within twenty-four hours."

"If the skipper would let me use the motor we'd be there sooner," declared Clive.

He poured upon the table a shower of pearls of all sizes and shapes. The boys gasped at their number and beauty.

"While there's wind we'll be saving our petrol," replied O'Rourke. "But don't worry, Misther Engineer, we'll be needing your services before we're through wid this little game. What wid calms an' storms, an' pirates an' Black Flags, 'tis as well we have not got to thrust to sail-power alone."

"I say, O'Rourke," said Austin, suddenly. "D'ye think the skipper will ever get the money he wants out of this lagoon? Seven hundred and fifty thousand is a fearful lot of coin."

"It's there, and more, too," replied O'Rourke. "'Tis the richest oyster-bed in all the islands,

and wan that no one has touched yet, barring the captain. I wouldn't wonder if there was two millions' worth of pearls and shell there."

Austin gave a low whistle.

"All the same," he said, presently, "if I had two millions I shouldn't want to make a present of half of it to the British Government. They tax one enough as it is."

"Ye don't know what ye are talking about," said O'Rourke, sternly. "'Tis not the dirthy money the captain is afther. 'Tis his honour."

The boys both stared at the big Irishman. They had never heard him speak like this before.

"D'ye mane to tell me ye don't understhand?" demanded O'Rourke.

"I understand that Captain Heritage lost his ship by running her on a reef off Perim, and that he means to replace her with a new one, which he will give to the country," said Austin.

"And is it yourself that thinks that a man like the captain would be afther losing his ship by bad seamanship?"

"I certainly shouldn't have thought so, but I suppose anyone is liable to make a mistake."

"So ye niver have heard the truth of it at all?" exclaimed O'Rourke.

"I suppose not," said Austin. "Tell us."

"I will. It was not the captain at all that lost the *Scylla*. He was not even on the bridge whin she tuk the rocks. 'Twas Lootenant Ormston, his brother-in-law, that was navigating her—an obstinate mule of a man that always thought he knew betther than anyone else.

"The captain had set his course for him before he went below, but the lootenant must needs alter it. 'Twas a smooth sea, wid only a bit of a fog; but he druv her full on the Murra Reef, and the fust the captain knew of it was the crash when she hit the rocks at full fourteen knots."

"You mean he saved his brother-in-law at his own expense?" said Clive, sharply.

O'Rourke nodded.

"Ye are right, Misther Denham. That's what he did. Threw away the finest career a man cud have for the sake of a fellow that wasn't worth his little finger. He tuk all the blame; and whatever the Court of Inquiry might have suspicioned, they had no choice but to put him on the shelf."

For a full minute neither of the boys spoke. Then Austin broke the silence.

"Thank you, O'Rourke," he said, quietly.

"I am glad you told us. Now I understand a lot that puzzled me before. And I'll tell you this—that whatever we can do to help him to win back his proper place, that we'll do to the last drop of our blood."

"We will," said Clive.

O'Rourke looked very kindly at the two lads.

"Sure we'll live to see him an admiral," he said.

Before any of them could speak again there came the sound of running feet on the deck above. Next moment Sam Coot, the boatswain, thrust his head in at the saloon door.

"The captain would like to see you on deck, sir," he said, touching his forelock.

O'Rourke sprang up, and the two boys followed him up the companion.

Arrived on deck, the first thing they saw was an enormous junk lying right across the schooner's course.

She was a huge craft of her kind, with sides that towered like an old-fashioned man-of-war, and no fewer than three masts. But she had no sails set, and lay wallowing in the swell, apparently out of all control.

O'Rourke ran up to the bridge; the two boys stood staring at the junk.

"Must have come to grief in that bit of a blow we had last night," said Austin.

"Yes, and I suppose that flag she's flying upside down at her fore is a signal of distress?" added Clive. "What a whacking big craft she is!"

"Jove—yes! She's twice our size. Take a bit of a crew to navigate her. With those high sides she must be about as hard to handle as a haystack."

"I can't see many men aboard her," said Clive. "I wonder what she wants us to do."

"Port your helm!" came Heritage's voice from the bridge. "Down tops'ls!"

The schooner's head was run up into the wind, and she lay tossing gently in the long swell.

O'Rourke came up to the boys.

"Misther Denham, the captain's ordhers are that ye have your engine ready to sthart. Misther Chesney, will ye see that ammunition for the quick-firers and the six-pounders is brought up from the magazine?"

"Why, what's up?" exclaimed Austin, in surprise.

"'Deed, and we don't know that anything is up," said O'Rourke, coolly. "But we won't be takin' any chances in dealing wid Chinese junks."

"But she's a wreck," objected Austin.

"Maybe she is, and maybe she isn't," said the big Irishman, with a twinkle in his eyes. "Just you obey the masther's ordhers an' ye'll see what ye'll see."

Much mystified, Austin called a couple of hands, and went below to the magazine. For a small sailing ship the *Brilliant* was extraordinarily heavily armed. She carried half a dozen of the latest quick-firers, including two Maxims which fired the one-pound shells known as pom-poms, and two Hotchkiss six-pounders which had a range of 4,500yds. She also had plenty of modern magazine rifles, and there was hardly a man of her crew of sixteen who could not make fair shooting. During the whole of the voyage Captain Heritage had kept them hard at work at firing practice.

All the guns were at ordinary times kept well concealed, being covered up with heavy tarpaulins, and when Austin came on deck again he was ordered not to uncover them until he was told to do so, but to have all ready to open fire if necessary.

"It's the rummiest game I ever heard," he muttered to himself, as he carried out his instructions. "Surely we can't be in any danger from that hopeless-looking old hulk!"

The junk had now drifted down to within about a hundred yards of the schooner, and Captain Heritage hailed her through a speaking-trumpet. He spoke Chinese sufficiently well to make himself understood.

A pig-tailed, yellow-skinned man, short in height but broad in build, stood up on the lofty poop and answered.

"He says his rudder is broken, and that they can't mend it," explained Heritage to O'Rourke. "Wants to know if we can send a boat aboard with help."

"'Deed, sorr, I wouldn't do anything of the sort," answered the big Irishman.

"I don't mean to," said Heritage. "You can't trust any of these beggars. At the same time it may be a genuine case, and if that is so we don't want to leave them in the lurch. My notion is to start up the screw very quietly, and move the *Brilliant* near enough to find out a little more about her. Then we can act accordingly."

"Very good, sorr. But I'd have the men take cover before we git in range."

"Pass the order to that effect. I'll call down to Denham to start his engine."

The screw began to revolve, but as there was no smoke or noise, and no disturbance of the water, it was impossible for anyone to see what was causing the *Brilliant* to creep slowly nearer to her big neighbour.

Within a couple of minutes the two vessels were within biscuit throw.

Along the front of the *Brilliant's* bridge ran a low parapet of thin sheet steel. Keeping well behind this, Heritage picked up his trumpet again and hailed the junk.

As he did so her lofty bulwarks suddenly swarmed with armed men, and Heritage had just time to duck below his armoured breastwork before scores of antiquated firearms were levelled on the schooner, and with a tremendous crash a storm of bullets raked her fore and aft.

At the same moment the great mat sails of the junk ran up like magic, and as they filled her lofty bow, decorated with two immense red eyes, swung round, and she bore down upon the schooner like some enormous cormorant swooping upon its prey.

The deck of the *Brilliant* was covered with white scars, there were numerous small holes in her sails, and here and there her running rigging hung loose, cut by a bullet from a jingal or one of the other antiquated firearms used by the pirates.

Otherwise there was no damage. Owing to the precautions taken by Captain Heritage not one of the schooner's crew had been touched.

At the same time, Heritage had not been prepared for the bold manœuvre which the junk was now carrying out. She was twice the size of the *Brilliant*, and if she managed to run the schooner down the latter would be the sufferer.

Springing to his feet regardless of the missiles which still whistled through the air or thudded against the woodwork, he shouted an order to the men at the guns, then sprang to the engine-room telegraph.

Quick as a flash the tarpaulins which had hidden the Maxims and six-pounders were whipped aside, and with a roar that made the stout little vessel quiver in every plank, the muzzles of these four weapons burst into flame.

At such a range there was no question of missing, and every shell went crashing into the very heart of the huge unwieldy hull of the junk.

Great gaps opened like magic in her tall sides, and from the heart of her arose yells and screams in a wild medley of many Eastern tongues.

Her rascally crew had expected an easy capture. The very last thing that had entered their minds was that the inoffensive-looking trading vessel should turn out to possess such teeth.

"Let 'em have it, lads!" roared the big O'Rourke, his blue eyes glittering with excitement. Battle to him was the very breath of his nostrils. "Begor, but the treacherous spalpeens shall have their lesson!"

Austin, behind the steel shield of the other six-pounder, laughed as he thrust another shell into the smoking breach of his gun.

"Go it, O'Rourke! The beggars have caught a Tartar this time!"

"Fire higher. Cut the masts out of her!" came Heritage's ringing order from the bridge. "Quick, or she'll be on us!"

Hulled as the junk was, her masts and sails were intact, and so too was her tiller. With the strong breeze behind her, she was bearing down at ever-increasing speed upon the *Brilliant*.

Below, in the engine room of the schooner, Clive was working desperately to get up speed, so as to run the vessel clear of the junk.

But as ill luck had it, some little impurity in the oil, a bit of fluff or something of the sort had partially choked the supply pipe from the oil-tank, with the result that the engine was not developing half her proper power. It was no fault of his, but it was a matter which, if it did not right itself, would take time to remedy.

If Heritage had known what was wrong he could have trimmed sail and run clear, but he had not heard Clive's reply to his first order to give full power, and every moment he was expecting the *Brilliant* to quicken and draw clear.

By the time that he had realised that something was wrong, it was too late. The towering bows of the junk rose like a cliff above the *Brilliant*'s rail.

Heritage shouted to the man at the wheel to luff.

The latter obeyed instantly, but even so there was not time left to avoid the impact. The bows of the junk struck the *Brilliant* a glancing blow on the starboard side near the stern, and at the moment of the collision a score or more of her pirate crew who had been massed ready under her bulwarks leaped down on to the schooner's deck.

"All hands repel boarders!" roared Heritage, and, revolver in hand came leaping down the bridge ladder.

The deck of the *Brilliant* rang hollow under a rush of feet as a dozen of his men came tearing from every direction to join him.

The pirates did not wait to be attacked. With their ugly crooked kreeses gleaming in the bright sunlight, they dashed forward in a compact body.

Austin had a vision of bare brown bodies, dark faces and flashing eyes. He heard the skipper's pistol bark twice, and saw two of the pirates drop in their tracks. Then he and the rest of them were in the thick of it.

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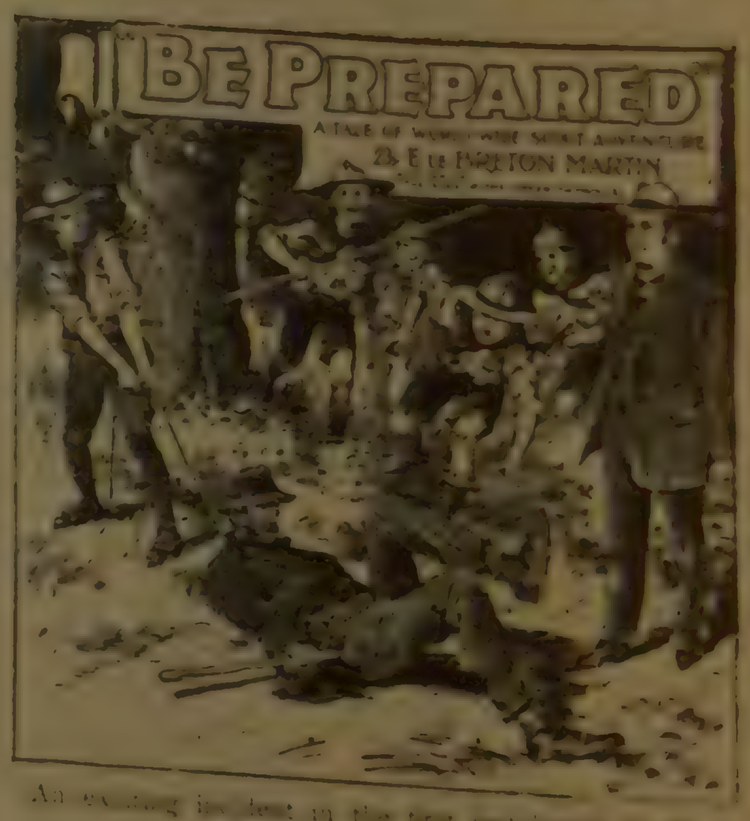

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THE SWAB

By CAPTAIN
G·A·HOPE

CHAPTER ONE

BAD BLOOD

MOIR was looking depressed. It was the first night of the winter term, certainly, but still, as his chum Wade pointed out, that was no reason for his looking glum. For Moir was great in Longmead, captain of house fifteen, of a dormitory and the lower corridor, and was looked upon as an absolute certainty for an early place in the school fifteen as three-quarter.

"It's my young cousin," he answered, "only don't tell anyone else I said so. His mother has sent him here, because I'm in the house, and, of course, expects me to look after him."

"You ought to feel flattered," said Wade. "Is his name Moir?"

"No, Hodgkin." Wade whistled, and then tried to look as if he hadn't. "Oh, don't worry about that," went on Moir. "You've seen him, evidently. Well, you can understand my delight. He's never been to school before, though he's fourteen, and how I'm to lick him into shape, without having a row with my aunt, I don't know. The trouble is, that I'm very fond of her. She's an awfully good sort, and has always been very decent to me. But she's clean dotty about Percy; he's her only child, you see, and she's spoilt him wickedly."

"Cheer up!" said Wade. "It remains for you to unspoil him. You never know your luck. Well, so long—I must off and see Jacky."

"Well, you might pass the word for my young cousin; I haven't seen him yet."

In a minute or two Master Hodgkin arrived. His short life story was written all over him. He was painfully fat and soft-looking, with puffy cheeks, on which were the marks of recent tears, a permanently open mouth, and dull, stupid eyes, which were now, however, slightly enlivened by a look of distressed bewilderment.

"I say, this is a beastly place, Tom," was his greeting.

"You'll soon get used to it," replied Moir, "and you'll like it no end. His most pressing desire was to shake the wretched little muff violently. But he was a decent chap, and had the sense to see that his cousin's condition was in no way his own fault.

"I hope Aunt Kate's well," he added. "By the way, who's in your study with you?"

"A very big chap—his name is Webling, I think," replied Percy. "Tom, tell me what I'm to do. Where am I to sleep?"

"The dame'll show you," answered Tom. "You're in my dormitory." He gave his bewildered cousin a little general information, but he was unfeignedly glad when a message came from the dame, who wished to show the new boy his cubicle.

He had hardly gone when there was a knock at the door, and a moment later another new boy entered, but a new boy of totally unique kind. To begin with, he was at least sixteen, and big at that; Moir saw at once a strong shover in his house scrum in the new comer. But as a set-off to that, which excited the house captain's aversion at once, his visitor, from the top of his brilliantined head to his eau-de-nil socks and much perforated patent-leather shoes, had obviously laid himself out to reproduce that repulsive modern excrescence known popularly as a "nut."

"I say" said the new comer affably, "you're Moir, aren't you? Captain of the house?"

"I'm captain of games," replied Moir, shortly. "What's your name?"

"Webling. I was at Camelot up to last

term. I wish you'd put me up to your local notions a bit."

"I don't mind," said Moir, affably. After all, Webling was not a kid, and had probably been someone at his old school. "But why did you come here from Camelot?"

"Oh!" Webling looked slightly confused for a moment—"oh, my governor had a bit of a row with the beaks, so he took me away and has sent me here, which is pretty sickening. I say, is one bound to have a double study here? I've been shoved in with a most frantic freak—calls itself Hog, no, Hodgkin—that's its name."

"My cousin," said Moir, coldly.

"Oh! Sorry for you," retorted Webling, unmoved, "but sorrier for myself. Can't I get a single study?"

"Hardly, your first term."

"How rotten! I say, you play Rugby football here, don't you?" he pursued, looking at his nails and pulling a compendium of indifferent cutlery from his hip-pocket, from which he produced a pair of small scissors. "I'm off in that act," he added. "I've never played, and don't want to."

"'Fraid that won't make much difference," said Moir. He was beginning to dislike Longmead's latest acquisition intensely. "Everyone has to play here, unless excused by the doctor. If you cut it, well, the rule here is the same as at Camelot or anywhere else."

"Oh, come, that's for kids!" laughed Webling, putting away his scissors into the knife-handle.

"Sorry to contradict you," said Moir, grimly. "But we make no distinction here, except for school prefects. But look here, you'd better go and see the dame about your cubicle and so on. She'll be looking for you."

"The dame? Oh, that queer old piece I saw just now. I say——"

"Look here," said Moir, rising. This, he considered, was the limit. "She's a jolly good sort, and you'd best be civil to her, or else look out for squalls."

"Oh, don't worry—I know all about that," said Webling, quite unabashed. "Well, so long. Many thanks for your information."

"Swab!" ejaculated Moir, venomously, as the door closed. "Swab!" he repeated, as it opened again to admit Wade.

"If that's the nut I saw come out of here," said Wade, "I second the motion. I say, where was he sacked from?"

Moir told him.

"Then being from seven-hundred-year-old Camelot, no doubt he looks down upon seventy-year-old Castleburgh," said Wade. "Did he tell you so?"

"Pretty nearly," replied Moir. "Let's hope he's placed below the Fourth, though I doubt it. If he is, hanged if I don't make him fag for me! He's too big for his boots altogether, and they pretty nearly filled the study. He's made me feel peckish. Let's rout out Mellish. He's sure to have some grub."

But whatever the cause of dispute between Webling's father and Camelot College had been, it was certainly not caused by the boy's lack of brains. He was placed on the top form of the modern school, a record, and so was beyond the reach of fagging. But he remained in his double study with Hodgkin, an arrangement at which he made no attempt to conceal his disgust.

But clever though he was, he was not clever enough to realise that his seniority at Camelot did not make him anything but a new boy at Castleburgh. Had he possessed any tact he would very soon have found his right level among the seniors in his house when they had got to know him. As it was, he very soon came into direct collision with authority.

In view of his openly expressed opinions, Moir kept an eye on him quietly. He did not want his cousin to suffer as the innocent cause of Webling's discomfort. However, he saw no signs of anything in this direction, but he very soon noticed that the big new boy was in frequent collision with the smaller men on the corridor, and a good many growls came to his ears as to the way this "beastly new blighter" was going on. The climax came when the term was but ten days old.

Moir was in his study after call-over, getting ready to brew, to which his young cousin was invited, when he heard a study door open half way up the corridor, from which someone went to another opposite. In a minute or two a voice he recognised well was raised in anger, with another, shriller, in vigorous protest; then came sounds of violent blows and of the upsetting of chairs and smashing of crockery.

By this time the captain was at the scene of action, and found a partially wrecked study, in which one small boy was sitting on the floor with an expression of mingled rage and terror, contemplating Webling, who was busy clumping another wretched child, whom he held by a twisted arm.

"What the dickens do you mean by this,

Webling?" exclaimed Moir, as the other dropped his victim and looked round.

"Mean?" said Webling. "I told this young scug to go to Telson's for me, and he refused point blank, and gave me cheek besides. Don't you lam kids at this bright place when they give you cheek?"

Moir could not trust himself to speak for a moment. Then getting Webling outside, he closed the door.

"Come down to my study Webling," he said. "Look here," he went on, when they were alone, "you can't go on like this."

"Can't I?" retorted Webling. "Why not?"

"Because you can't," replied Moir. "I don't know what your standing was at Camelot, but this is your first term here, and, naturally, the kids object to fagging for you. Besides, you're not in the Sixth,

In the partially wrecked study Webling was busy striking a small boy, while another, sitting on the floor, wore an expression of mingled rage and terror.

and so, strictly speaking, you've no right to fag anyone."

"M'yes," sneered Webling. "Nothing like sticking to rules. Why have you told your precious cousin that he's got to fag for you, then?"

"That's no business of yours," said Moir, quietly. "Besides, as I said, the point is that this is your first term, and if you try to fag anyone, there'll be rows, and that's what I'm here to stop. So drop it, and, also, don't go knocking the kids about promiscuously, because I won't have that either."

"Oh! What'll you do?"

"What I don't want to do with a chap of your age and place in the school," replied Moir. "But I shall do it if you force me. Don't be an ass, Webling—I don't want to quarrel with you."

Cousin Percy appeared a few minutes later, after Webling had departed, white with rage. He was not quite so inclined to whimper as he had been, but he confided to Tom that he thought Castleburgh a beastly place, that the other boys were also beastly, and that having to play football was still more beastly. But

what he specially resented was being called the Hog, as it appeared he had been renamed at once, or Piggy, its subsequent modification. He seemed to resent it, too, when Moir laughed.

"You'll soon get used to it," the latter said. "You mustn't whine or get angry with them, Percy, and you'll soon get on all right. Blow!" he exclaimed. He was opening a biscuit-tin with a sealed lid, and the ripping arrangement had suddenly gone wrong. "And I haven't a tin-opener. Have you?"

"There's one in my knife," replied Percy, and diving into his pocket he produced the identical cutlery compendium which Webling had had.

"Hullo!" said Moir, "isn't this Webling's?"

"It was," answered the other, "but he didn't want it, so he sold it to me for a sov. He said it cost a lot more."

"H'm!" muttered Moir, half to himself, as the tin-opener bent. "I guess the Swab has got a leak in his memory tank. But I say, Percy, you must have got a lot of money to be able to chuck quids about like that."

"Oh, mother gives me all I want," replied Percy, complacently.

"Just so," said Moir, meditatively. "Well, if I were you I wouldn't waste too much of it buying rubbish off the Swab."

"Why do you call him the Swab? I think he is a very nice fellow."

"I'm glad you get on well with him now, as he's in your study," replied Moir. He began to understand the Swab's change of front, and also the origin of the sumptuous brews that went on in that study. "But I don't like him, and if you're wise you won't be too ready to make a friend of him, or give him all he asks for."

When they had finished—and Percy took some satisfying—Moir collected the things and said, "Now, youngster, take these and wash them up."

Percy stared.

"But I don't know how to," he said.

"I know, but you've got to learn," returned Moir. "There isn't much fagging here—we look after ourselves mostly—but I shall want you to do it occasionally. I took you on so as to save you from having to be routed out casually by any big man. Now no one else will ask you to do anything. You don't know your luck."

Percy did not even try to recognise it, but he made an attempt at washing up. It is true that he broke a plate, and that everything needed doing again, but that is neither here nor there. He certainly tried, if somewhat ungraciously, in spite of the entertainment he had enjoyed.

His next attempt was slightly better, his third better still, and Moir was beginning to have hopes of him when the crash came. It was not broken crockery, but something far worse. He and Wade had been brewing, and when they had done had hailed a passing junior and told him to fetch Piggy, as he was now universally known.

But no Piggy appeared, and after a loud but ineffectual call, Moir got up and went to his study. He was in, and so was Webling, who smiled affably and invited Moir to come in.

"Come to my study, Piggy," said Moir, austerely, paying no attention to the other boy, and turning away without waiting to see if his young cousin were going to obey him. However, obey he did, though after a distinct interval, and appeared with a small blue paper-bound pamphlet in his hand.

"Didn't you get my message, or hear me call?" queried Moir, blandly.

"Yes, but"—he shook like a jelly fish, indicating the pamphlet he had in his hand—"I've been reading the rules."

"Very virtuous of you, Piggy. However, I must ask you to postpone your studies till you've washed up."

"It says here," returned Piggy, "that no one not in the Sixth may fag a boy."

"True, Piggy, it does. What then?"

"Well, you're not in the Sixth, so you can't fag anyone."

Wade gasped, and blank amazement deprived him of all volition for a moment. He expected to see Moir clear for action promptly, family ties notwithstanding, but his demoralisation was completed when the captain only laughed good-humouredly.

"True again, Piggy," he said. "It's only a bad, illegal custom we have here. You're the first who's ever noticed it, but you're in the right, so cut along."

"Moir!" exclaimed Wade, almost faintly. "Are you going to stand that?"

"Oh, I think so," said Moir, lightly. "For one thing, the young rotter's little better than a baby, and for another I am certain the Swab put him up to it."

"Then have him up and simply slay him," said Wade, energetically. "He's been asking for it ever since he came."

"He has, but all the same he won't get it this time. After all, I have no legal right to fag, and if he appealed, as he probably would,

Jacky would have to support him. Besides, I know a much better way than that. You know how he's always jeering at Rugby football."

"And jolly slack he is, too," said Wade. "I was watching Lower game the other day. But he's strong and fast. He ought to be good."

In view of his lack of experience, Webling had so far played on Lower game, in spite of his size.

"Yes, yes, quite so, as the Dormouse says," replied Moir. "You know Hall got crocked to-day, and the doctor says he won't be fit for weeks."

"How sickening! But, I say, you don't surely mean to put the Swab in his place?"

"I do, though."

"Splendid! I might have expected it," returned Wade, sarcastically. "Let me resign my colours and cap and give them to Piggy. Clean off your chump, man!"

"No, I'm not," said Moir, with a laugh. "There's lots of method in my madness. The Swab'll be jolly useful if he'll only play up. Besides, he's a conceited ass, and feels sick at coming here as a new chap, after a long time at Camelot, and it may make him forget to be an ass. I prefer peaceful methods of persuasion when possible. Of course, if he does sulk, well, I don't think he'll do it twice, certainly not three times."

Any decently constituted boy would have been overjoyed at his promotion. But the Swab was a freak. Besides, he hated and despised Castleburgh and Longmead unreservedly, and, in addition, considered that he had a strong personal grievance against Moir himself. He played, because he could not well escape doing so, but his play consisted in trotting limply about the field, and in leaning on his neighbours' shoulders in the scrum.

Moir did nothing after the game beyond giving him a few hints as to how the game should be played, and a little veiled advice as to what would happen if he did not take the hints. However, the Swab took neither. On the second day his play became even more markedly eccentric, culminating in standing looking at the ball on one occasion, when even Piggy could have dribbled it in and secured a try.

This time Moir said nothing. But that evening, just before prep, when the corridor was full of boys, moving about in the last few moments of liberty, he went to Webling's study with the implement of justice in his hand.

"Get out of here, Piggy," he said. "Now, Webling, I have stood enough. You shirked deliberately again this afternoon, so I'm going to teach you not to."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Webling. "If you think I'm going——'

"You know quite well what I mean, and you are going to take a licking," interrupted Moir. "Over that desk, please."

The Swab stood up and faced Moir. He was as big and as broad as the other, and obviously strong. As they looked at each other for a moment, Moir saw red murder in Webling's eyes.

"That sort of thing doesn't pay any better at Castleburgh than at Camelot," he went on. "If you will behave like a sulky kid, you mustn't be surprised at being treated like one. Now, then."

Webling had considered himself a much aggrieved man in being at Castleburgh at all. But this latest outrage was, he decided, the absolute limit. It never occurred to him that he had asked for it, almost daily, since he had arrived. One thing was certain. He must get his own back on Moir, if he had to wait a year to do it. But how that was to be done was not immediately apparent, and next morning, as he started up to college for first school, he was still revolving impossible schemes in his mind, when he met his form master, who was also master of Bourne House, one of the other out houses. Mr. Philips, commonly called the Pip, was a profound scholar and a linguist of European reputation. But at Castleburgh his equally well-deserved reputation was that of being the most easily gulled master in all the staff.

"Ah, good morning, Webling," he said, genially. The Swab's work in form had already impressed him, and so the simple-minded Pip had taken a fancy to him. "A pleasant morning, is it not, for the time of year?"

The Swab acquiesced perforce. He did not in the least want to talk to the Pip, but could not well refuse, so the latter rippled on like a brook, Webling acting as occasional chorus, till they reached the class-room. But by this time Webling was in a good temper. The Pip had given him, all unknowingly, the idea he wanted. Its only drawback was that it might take time to mature. But Webling did not mind that. He was of the unusual and objectionable type of boy who can keep up a grudge over several terms, if necessary.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GAMBLING DEN

WHATEVER Webling's plan was, he kept it to himself. He ceased to butt against authority, but he made no friends in the house, except Piggy, with whom he remained intimate, even when he was given a single study next term, which irritated Moir considerably. This was not the Swab's great scheme, but the annoyance he caused Moir thereby was certainly a minor reason for his intimacy with his cousin, and also for the number of outside visitors whom he took to entertaining on Sunday afternoons. Moir objected to strangers in the house at any time, but those whom the Swab favoured were those he particularly disliked, nuts in the bud like himself, with money to spend, who did not mind letting everybody know that they had it. There are always a few such to cumber the earth of a public school, and the Swab found them all.

However, on the whole, the year passed fairly peaceably, till the winter term came round again. Moir had come back as captain of the school fifteen, as well as of his house. He was not, however, yet a school prefect. He had climbed as far as the Upper Fifth, but had missed his promotion at the end of the summer term. This was particularly unfortunate, as there was no one else in the Sixth Form in the house. However, he was senior and to be head of the house, so Mr. Jackson had told him at the end of the previous term, with prefect's authority in it. But when he went to see Mr. Jackson on returning he received the most unpleasant surprise of his life.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, Moir," said Jacky. "But you will not be head of the house. We've got an unexpected modern school prefect."

"Modern school, sir?" said Moir, recalling four boys in its top form and finding nothing to recommend in any of them. "Who is it?"

"Webling." Mr. Jackson had considerable control of his features, but Moir could see that he was not pleased. "He was most enthusiastically recommended by Mr. Philips, his form master, and as I had—well, there it is, Moir. I'm very sorry it's not you. But you should have got your promotion."

"I wish I had, sir," he replied, and never meant words more sincerely. The prospect of having the Swab as head of the house was too painful to contemplate. He went back to his study dreamily, and before he had been in it two minutes the Swab himself appeared.

"Hullo, Moir!" he said, genially. "Jolly being back, isn't it? I say, has Jacky told you? The Pip got me made a prefect."

"Yes, I heard. I congratulate you."

"I thought you'd be pleased. Great man, the Pip. Thinks no end of me. I've walked up to coll. with him nearly every day since I've been here. And I thought I'd let you know this. I'm not going to play footer any more."

Everything was quite clear to Moir now. The Pip was quite empowered to recommend a boy in his form for prefectship, apart from his house master, and the Swab had played for this deliberately and won. He was under no delusions as to his enemy's feelings. He had forgotten and forgiven nothing, and Moir prepared himself for trouble.

However, for three weeks nothing happened, and Moir was much too busy over house football to concern himself with the new prefect. By bad luck, nearly all the previous year's house fifteen, except himself and Wade, had left. Consequently Upper game was very bad, and Lower like a caricature in bad taste. This would not have mattered so much if Lower had tried, but they did not. They were so badly beaten in their early games as to be quite demoralised, and finally, one afternoon, Moir saw them take a defeat of about twenty-five goals, besides odd tries, to nil, without any apparent interest in the fact.

Moir decided that drastic action was now demanded. That evening, at tea-time, he announced that every single member of the defeated side would be licked that night. Accordingly, accompanied by Wade and one other member of the house fifteen, he went up to the last double study on his corridor, opposite that one occupied as a single by Webling. The victims came to their fate like lambs, but before he could begin, the Swab came out of his study.

"I can't allow this," he said.

"Can't allow what?" said Moir.

"This wholesale execution," returned Webling. "If you can name any particular rotter who deserves it, well and good. But I'm not going to allow the kids to be knocked about promiscuously. That's all. Go back to your study, Wright and Rogers. There's a lot too much of this here, and I'm going to stop it."

He was as good as his word. Two days later, an ill-conditioned youngster, on being slanged again for slack play, had given back answers, relying on the immunity conferred on the discomfited team. Moir promptly got

into action, but in the middle, Webling appeared and stopped him.

"Slackness and cheek, do you call that?" he said, when Moir had explained. "I don't agree. If I have any more of this, I'll make you refer to me before turning anyone up."

A litt'e later Moir, much against his will, went to the Swab's study, and expostulated temperately. But the Swab only laughed unpleasantly.

"I'm merely applying the lessons you taught me last year," he said. "Meanwhile, I think I saw a spirit stove in your study. You know they're not allowed; bring it to me and do two hundred lines."

The Swab was getting his own back with a vengeance, and continued to do so. Then, to cap all, came a letter to Moir from his aunt, complaining that dear Percy had already spent a sum of money which even his long-suffering mother thought excessive, and which fairly took Moir's breath away. She really thought that Tom might have kept a better eye on him, and she hoped he would do so—not that she wished Tom to think that she thought he had not, etc., etc.

This was the limit. He determined to put dear Percy through the third degree. With this intention he went off to his study. Percy was not there, neither was his study mate, and Moir was about to go, when a paper on the floor caught his eye. He picked it up. It was covered with names, the same ones recurring again and again, and figures in Percy's writing, had evidently been meant for the waste-paper basket, but Percy had made a bad shot, and had not troubled to correct it.

Then, strange to say, Moir gave up his idea of putting Piggy to the question, and for the

Moir opened the study door, and found five boys busily gambling. "Kick those fellows out, Webling," he said, grimly; "I want to have a talk with you."

rest of the week—this was Monday—gave himself up to unalloyed delight. When Sunday came he waited till the slackness of the afternoon had well settled down. Half the house was brewing happily, Webling had his usual party of outsiders in, and the other half were either out walking or dozing in their studies. Then leaving his study, he walked slowly up the corridor, and stood outside Webling's door, looking out of the window at Bourne House, a hundred yards away.

An intermittent sound of voices came from the study, short silences, and then exclamations followed by short conversation, then a short silence again. Moir smiled grimly, and then, without waiting, opened the door and entered.

"Cheery way of spending Sunday afternoon," he remarked. "Gambling?"

In the centre of the study was a table, and round it were Webling, Piggy, and three outside budding nuts. On the table was a disc divided into various-sized segments, in each of which was depicted a racehorse. Round it was a good deal of loose money, and Webling was in the act of making notes on a piece of paper, similar to those Moir had found in Piggy's study.

Piggy and the nuts started and turned all manner of colours, but Webling remained quite unabashed.

"Yes, what can I do for you, Moir?" he said.

"Have a little heart to heart talk," replied Moir, "for which purpose kick out Piggy and these other chaps."

"I think not; they are my guests."

"I don't care if they are," said Moir, bluntly. "Anyhow, Piggy's going. You've been rooking him wholesale this term. I saw from his notes, and I'm going to stop it. We don't allow gambling machines in Longmead any more than spirit stoves."

"May I ask how you're going to stop it?"

"I'm not at all sure that I shan't hammer you and then say why when the row comes on," said Moir, slowly, though the plan did not commend itself to him.

"Very primitive," sneered Webling. "Why not report me to Jacky straight?"

"No need," said a grim voice. "I happened to come in by the back way, under your window, Webling, and from what I heard, just before Moir came in and after, I thought I would pay you a visit. It may be news to you, Webling," went on Mr. Jackson, "that if you leave your window open, as you have, one can hear every word that is said in here from the stone alley below."

* * * * *

Next Saturday the school played Exeter College. When the match was over, the captain, a man in his second year, up from Camelot, asked Moir if he knew a fellow called Webling, who had been requested to leave Camelot and had come to Castleburgh.

"Fair terror, he was, too," went on the Camelot boy. "Ran a roulette board and made a book on races, and rooked men, especially kids, no end. Got it into his head that he was a sportsman, and tried to act according. It came out at the end of the summer term last year; one of the kids gave away the show to his pater, and he was requested to go. Do you know him?"

"I did," said Moir, with a laugh. "He's just been sacked for the same thing, and it was one of the kids who gave him away too, out of sheer chuckle-headedness, though. He's a jolly good riddance. He was in our house, and a bigger swab I never knew."

THE END

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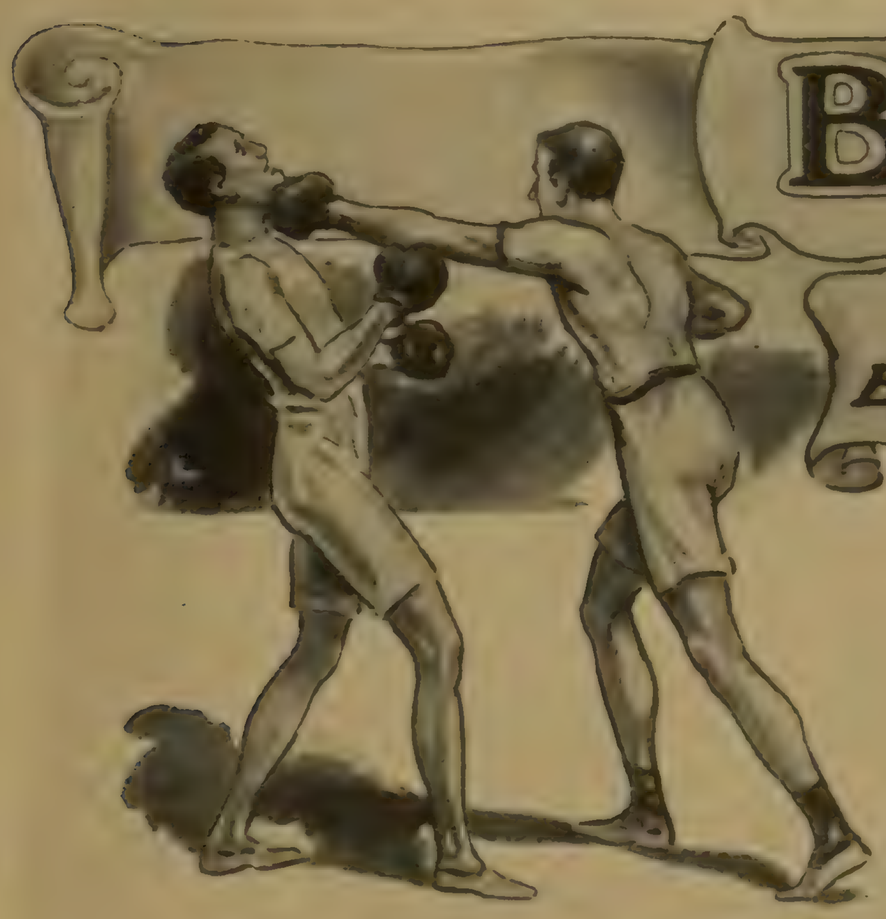


BOXING FOR BOYS

BY A·L·CHAMPNEYS

A Splendid New Series of Practical and Instructive Articles by the Famous Heavyweight Champion of Oxford University in 1899, 1900, and 1901

(The full story of how Mr. Champneys won fame as a boxer will be found on page 124)

BOXING, like swimming, is a sport which is often useful directly as well as indirectly. That is to say, by learning to box we not only develop our physical and mental qualities, but we acquire an art which many have found useful in an emergency. This fact gives boxing an advantage over most other forms of sport, while it is second to none as a means of training muscle, eye, and intelligence.

In these civilised times many, if not most, men go through life from boyhood without having to use their fists even when they are able; but many have had occasion to be thankful for a knowledge of boxing. Those who know most about boxing are usually the least ready to "show off" without sufficient cause, and the consciousness of their ability often enables them to avoid being involved in a brawl.

Some years ago a well-known amateur boxer had a disagreement with a cabman. The cabman was extremely anxious to fight him, but he declined, and the cabman was run in by the police. When the case came into court the fare handed his card to the magistrate, and explained that he was quite capable of taking care of himself, but felt it his duty to the police to give his evidence. When the cabman heard his fare's name he thanked him with some warmth for leaving the matter in the hands of the police.

Although a boy learning to box will be encouraged by the knowledge that he is developing his muscles and his mind, and is at the same time learning how to take care of himself when need arises, he will find the process of learning as fascinating as any game, and the sport as much worth practising for its own sake as cricket or football.

Naturally some boys take to boxing more kindly than others, just as some people prefer football and others hockey, some swimming and others rowing, but generally, if a boy is sound enough to join in the other sports of boys, there is no reason why he should not take up boxing with success.

It is not always by any means the biggest or strongest boys who become the best boxers, and very many who, when they began boxing, were physically inferior to their schoolfellows have subsequently caught up and outdistanced those who devoted themselves to sports which stimulate a more partial development of the body.

Boxing develops every muscle in the body, as well as the heart and other organs. It certainly teaches quickness of every part, of the eye and of the mind. It also teaches courage and self-control, which does not mean a lamb-like resignation to being hit hard and often by one's opponent, as some beginners appear to think.

Like everything else worth doing, boxing has to be learnt, and cannot be learnt in a day. The earlier a boy begins to learn the better, and above all things he must learn to box correctly. With the finished boxer the different hits, stops, and other moves in detail have become very much a matter of habit, a sort of second nature, and for this reason it is before all things important that every mistake should be corrected when it first shows itself; for otherwise it will, if unchecked, become ineradicable.

The Blunders of Beginners

It would, of course, be impossible to warn beginners against all the errors that can be made, but to those who have seen a good deal of boxing there are a very large number which one sees constantly committed in amateur and professional boxing alike; and in the articles which will follow this I shall devote a good deal of the space to warning my readers against the commonest of these errors.

The main object of the boxer is to hit his opponent oftener than his opponent hits him; but it must be borne in mind that in this statement the word "hit" does not mean striking him anywhere. For instance, it is contrary to the rules of boxing to "hit below the belt." This term needs a little explanation. It does not refer to the belt that you buy at a shop, as the man thought who

put his belt round his forehead before going into the ring; but to the waist, where the belt is usually worn.

Also it does not mean hitting a man on his arm or shoulder or the top of his head, where the striker would probably hurt himself more than his opponent. Similarly, it is not much good hitting a man on the chest or on the back. There is, certainly, a punch often seen nowadays in professional boxing known as the "kidney punch," which lands on the back, but, for many reasons into which it is unnecessary to enter here, this is considered by most authorities to be one of the worst developments of modern professional boxing, and need not be dealt with, except by way of warning, in these articles.

The two most vulnerable points are (*a*) the wind, and (*b*) the point of the chin.

Hits Which Score

With the above exceptions any part of your opponent is a fair mark for a punch; that is to say, his face and the sides of his head, and sides of his body, and the part just above his belt. The two most vulnerable parts are the "point of the jaw," or chin, and the "wind" or "mark," which is in the centre of the body just below where the ribs divide. These two weak spots are generally responsible for "knock-out" blows; that is to say, a well-timed and properly directed punch on either place will render the receiver incapable of continuing the bout. This, however, is hardly a matter which will concern the beginner, and it will therefore be dealt with in a later article. It should be pointed out here, however, that a hit does not mean a mere flap with the glove, and it must be a hit with the knuckles and no other part of the hand. It is not necessary in practice to hit with all one's strength; in fact, one can really practise a hit better when hitting lightly. All the same, it must be correctly timed and delivered.

The effectiveness of a hit depends on two things. First, it must be delivered in such a way that the whole weight of the striker can be put into it if desired; secondly, it must reach its mark just at the moment when that mark is at the right distance from the striker.

Hitting, then, is the first object, so to speak, of the boxer. That is to say, it is not sufficient simply to avoid being hit oneself. This may sound obvious; but I have seen many boxers, more particularly in the Public Schools Championships, beaten by opponents who were really their inferiors, simply because they failed to realise that good defence without attack would not entitle them to the judge's verdict. Before all things the boxer must attack, but second only to that comes the importance of defence. There are as many ways of avoiding being hit as there are of hitting. These may be grouped roughly under three heads.

Methods of Defence

The first and most obvious method is to ward off your adversary's blow, as it comes towards you, with your arm or hand. This is known as guarding.

The second method consists in getting out of the way of the blow before it reaches you. There are various ways of doing this which will be dealt with subsequently, but the names for which may shortly be explained here. *Ducking* is moving one's head out of the way of a blow aimed at it. *Slipping* is stepping forward past one's opponent's arm as he hits. *Side-stepping* is, as the word implies, stepping to one side to avoid a blow. *Getting out of reach* is simply stepping back as the blow approaches, so as to allow it to fall short.

The third method of defence is countering, that is, hitting your opponent before his hit reaches you. Cross-counters are counter hits in which you use the opposite hand to the one your opponent is hitting with. For instance, if he hits with his left your counter with your right is a cross-counter because your right arm crosses his left, and the same is the case if he uses his right and you your left. Countering has this advantage over the other two methods of defence, namely, that it is also an attack; you hit your opponent besides avoiding his blow, and so, as it were, kill two birds with one stone.

Another thing for the beginner to remember is that both in attack and defence it is almost as important to know how to use your feet as to know how to use your hands. When two battleships are fighting, the faster of the two can choose its own range or can get out of range altogether if need be; and it is just the same with two boxers. I spent a day many years ago watching a series of boxing competitions with an experienced boxer sitting beside me. Before they began he said, "I'll pick the winner in each bout before they've been at it a minute." He hardly made a mistake, although we must have seen twenty couples in the ring; and many of his selections seemed most improbable at the time they were made. I asked him afterwards how he chose them, and he told me that he simply watched to see which could use his feet best. That was before I had seen much boxing, but I have often proved to myself since what a valuable guide to the result foot-work may be, even in short bouts in which it does not tell to the same extent as in long ones.

The above remarks will probably be a sufficient guide to the beginner as to what he will have to aim at, though I intend in another article to further emphasise various points which will be more intelligible at that stage.

Many of my readers no doubt have the advantage of being already under the tuition of a capable instructor, or else of being able to put themselves under such tuition. To these it will probably be easy to find suitable opponents and to practise with them under the eye of an instructor who will be able to detect and correct their errors more quickly than they could themselves. Those who are not so fortunately situated will have to find suitable opponents. Such a one should select someone who is not smaller than himself, but at the same time, unless one is very sure of his friendliness, he had better not be a great deal bigger. There was a prize-fighter in fiction who, when he wanted practice, used to dress up as a parson and go and contradict sailormen in Wapping; but the beginner will probably be better advised to practise with friends until he is thoroughly efficient.

How to Practise

When practising the various hits, guards, slips, ducks, and so on, do not be afraid of keeping on at the same thing until you get it perfect. It is very nice to be called "a box of tricks," but the appellation is only a mockery unless you do each of the tricks perfectly, and they can only be learnt one by one.

A certain amount can be done in practice by yourself, more especially foot-work; and a lot can be learnt in the way of hitting, especially half-arm hitting, with a punching-ball; one of those hung at the top under a drum. Punching bags, stuffed with flock, are best avoided by boys.

The question of training, boxing in competitions, and other matters of the kind, I shall deal with in a later article.

It is probably unnecessary to remind my readers that they will have to wear boxing-gloves when practising, and that the fashion of inserting a horse-shoe in the glove for luck is now out of date.

Position

Though the boxer is hardly ever standing still, it is most important that the beginner should master thoroughly the correct attitude from which every movement of attack or defence should be made.

Mistakes in respect of position are the most difficult to eradicate when once a boxer has got beyond his novitiate, and inevitably result in faults in attack and defence alike.

In order to explain the "why and wherefore" of the position in which a boxer stands, or should stand, it is necessary to anticipate to some extent what the learner will be taught more fully at a later stage. With a right-handed person the muscles of the right hand and arm are more fully developed than those of the left; but what they gain in strength is lost in suppleness and, consequently, quickness.

Now, the efficiency of a hit depends only very partially, as will be shown later, on the muscular strength of the arm, and, actually, the extra quickness of the left hand and arm make them the more efficient weapon of offence, and the right hand should only be used to follow up either a "lead" or a "feint" with the left.

A "feint" is a pretence of hitting in order to deceive your opponent and make him lay himself open to some other attack than that which you appeared to intend.

A "lead" is the first blow of an attacking movement which may or may not be followed by others.

Your "lead," then, or at least the "feint" that takes the place of the "lead," will always be made with the left hand, and for this reason you should stand with your left hand and foot in advance of the right, so that your left hand will have the shortest distance to travel when you wish to hit your opponent or counter his attack.

The right forearm is usually carried across the front of the body, the elbow being bent, so that both ribs and "wind" are protected.

Your feet should be so placed that your weight is about evenly balanced on them, as you will then be able either to advance or retreat easily. If the weight is all back on the right leg it has to be shifted when you move forward, and delays your movement; while if it is all forward, on the left leg, the same thing happens when you want to move out of your opponent's reach.

For the same reason your feet must not be too far apart, to allow of quick movement in either direction; nor, on the other hand, should they be so near together that you will topple over if hit.

The right heel should be slightly lifted and the left foot should be placed flat on the ground and should always point straight towards your opponent, because a "straight" hit with the left hand always follows the direction of the left toe.

There is no error in position more frequently seen than a turned-in left toe, and the left-handers, in such cases, always go "across" the culprit's opponent, and, if they ever reach him, do so more by luck than anything else.

(More hints on "Position," and other advice, fully illustrated, will be given in Mr. Champneys' article next month.)

Boxing Term: A "knock-out" blow

A 'Varsity Boxing Champion

A Chat with Mr. A. L. Champneys, the author of our splendid New Series of Self-defence Articles

APPEARANCES are proverbially deceptive, and perhaps never more so than in the case of a first-class gentleman boxer. You may pass him by in the street without the slightest suspicion of his power; you may talk to him for hours at a stretch, and he will never even hint at his skill; what is more, you may visit him with the express intention of obtaining from him some facts concerning his doings, and come away practically empty.

It is usually the case that greatness and modesty go hand in hand. It is certainly so with Mr. A. L. Champneys, ex-heavy-weight champion of Oxford University, and author of a splendid new series of articles on "How to Box," which he has specially written for the readers of THE CAPTAIN.

There are few of the outward and visible signs of a pugilist about Mr. Champneys—unless it be a tendency to close-cropped hair. Yet, as one faces him, striving hard to induce him to talk about himself and his fights—and coming perilously near failure—one notices certain little traits which bespeak the trained boxer. Despite his height—he stands 6ft. 2ins., and is broad in proportion—Mr. Champneys is noticeably light on his feet, while there is that in the poise of his body which shows how splendidly trained he is. And this—the necessity of "keeping fit"—is a point on which he lays some stress. No fellow, he says, can ever hope to succeed as a boxer if he does not keep his body in perfect condition.

Mr. A. L. Champneys.

As has already been hinted, it was no easy matter to get Mr. Champneys to speak about himself. Like so many of the boys who will read his articles, he went to a Public School, and it was at Charterhouse that he learned the first principles of boxing, his instructor being Sergeant-Major Noakes.

He soon proved an apt pupil, and in time was found worthy of representing his school at the Public Schools Boxing Tournament. This was in 1898, when Mr. Champneys was nineteen years of age, and he won in handsome form, beating his opponent in the semi-final in 45secs., and pulling off the final in something under the minute.

Indeed, he has almost invariably gone in for hard hitting at the outset of his fights, for after leaving Charterhouse he proceeded to Oxford, was entered for the Freshmen's competition, and knocked out his man in the first 30secs., an almost record achievement.

At the University he had the benefit of Sergeant J. Collins's training and advice. Collins was ex-army champion, both in the middle and heavy-weights, and the former Charterhouse boy rapidly improved under his care, so much so that, after being at Oxford for less than a year, he won his way to the championship of the University.

Unfortunately, in the course of the fight, Mr. Champneys hurt his hand, and was unable to appear in the Inter-'Varsity contest which came on soon after. The same thing happened in 1900, but in the following year he had better luck, and pulled on each event in his usual rapid fashion. On each of the three occasions the man he beat at Oxford won the match against Cambridge, so there can be little doubt as to what would have been the result had Mr. Champneys been able to represent his University.

The great Inter-'Varsity fight he regards as his best. It was certainly his hardest, for he was suffering from influenza at the time and was at least 14lbs. too light. His opponent turned the scale at about 14st., while he was only a pound or two over 11st., yet he had his man pretty well beaten in the second round, and won on points.

Since leaving the University Mr. Champneys has been obliged to devote his time to his profession of architect, but still follows the developments of the sport of which he was formerly a devotee. That he is one of the highest authorities on the noble art of self-defence is everywhere acknowledged, and Captainites who follow the articles that commence in this number will profit very considerably by his advice.

When asked as to whether he had ever found his skill of any practical service, Mr. Champneys smiled, but refused to commit himself. He admitted, however, that in his case the *mens sana in corpore sano* theory is justified, for he carried off an Honours degree before leaving Oxford.

Catching a Coon.

Telling of a trap that was set for a young tenderfoot, and of how he got out of it with flying colours.

- By -
T. C. Bridges

DICKY GREEN reined up his horse at the door of a dingy wooden building which a board outside stated to be the "Magnolia Hotel."

A youngish man with smooth black hair was lounging in the doorway smoking a cigar.

"Could you tell me how far it is to the Holland place?" inquired Mr. Green, rather shyly.

The black-haired young man looked up and beheld a very youthful Englishman with a round, smooth face, and a complexion so fresh that it was plain that its experience of Florida sun had been of the shortest. He wore neat riding breeches, tan gaiters and boots, and a bulge under the back of his light tweed coat seemed to show that he went "heeled."

"Why, certainly," he replied, politely. "It's somewheres about twelve miles from Pinelake. D'ye know the road, mister?"

"Can't say I do," said Dicky.

The other shook his sleek head. "It's a mighty bad one to find, and I reckon you won't reach there before dark."

Dicky looked troubled. "I suppose I couldn't get a guide?" he suggested.

"I guess not to-night. See here, why don't you get down and stay the night, and ride on in the morning?"

"Good idea," said Mr. Green, with evident relief. "If I can get a bed, that's just what I'll do."

His new friend stepped inside the door.

"Tod," he called. "Here's a gent wants to stay the night. Can you fix him up?"

A tall, lean man in shirt-sleeves stepped into sight. "That'll be all right," he said. "Come right in, mister. Tie your horse to the fence. Jake'll take him round presently. Supper's ready right now," he went on, hospitably. "Say, Randolph"—this to the sleek-headed young man—"you show the gent to the dining-room. I'm busy."

"My name is Green—Richard Green," said the new comer, diffidently.

"And mine's Randolph Armitage," said the other, extending his hand. "Pleased to meet you, Mr. Green. Come this way.

"You're a stranger to Florida, I reckon," continued Armitage as they took their seats, and a negro waiter dumped down about a dozen small dishes in front of each.

"Yes, I only left England a fortnight ago," answered Dicky, examining with puzzled face

the amazing array of different kinds of food which were spread before him, and presently discovering with evident relief a boiled potato and a small piece of grilled steak.

"Thinking of settling?"

"Yes, if I like it."

"It's a mighty fine country," said Armitage. "Good for orange growing and fine for hunting."

"Hunting—do you get hunting?" asked Dicky, eagerly.

"A right smart lot. Quail and snipe and duck."

"But you can't *hunt* quail," objected Dicky.

"I don't see why not," returned Armitage. "All you need is a gun and a bird dog."

"Oh, we call that shooting in England," explained Dicky. "Hunting is fox-hunting with hounds."

"Is that so?" said Armitage, turning his head away to hide a grin.

At that minute another man came in. He was about the same age as Armitage, and had a freckled face and the most violently red hair that Dicky had ever seen.

"Howdy, Randolph?" he said, nodding, as he took a seat opposite.

Armitage returned the salute. "Bob," he said, "this is Mr. Green, of England. Mr. Green, Mr. Robert Cherry."

"Pleased to meet you, sir," said Mr. Cherry, genially.

"Mr. Green is thinking of settling in Floridy," explained Armitage. "And I was telling him there's some mighty good hunting round here. He says that what they hunt in England is foxes."

"Well, there's foxes here," said Cherry. "Stacks of 'em. But they ain't much count when all's said and done. Sneaky chicken thieves. I reckon all that any of 'em's worth is a charge of buck-shot."

"What—you shoot foxes?" exclaimed Dicky, horror-stricken.

"Whenever we gets a chance," replied Cherry, calmly. "We've got something else to do than run 'em with dogs."

"Then is shooting quail and snipe the only sport you've got in this country?" inquired Dicky.

Cherry laughed with scorn. "I reckon not. There's 'possum and coon hunting. And deer and bear and wild cats down in the swamps."

Dicky's eyes gleamed.

"By Jove, I'd no notion there was big game here! I'd have brought a rifle if I'd known."

"You've got a shot-gun, haven't you?" asked Armitage.

"Oh, yes, I've got a gun—and a revolver," touching his hip pocket.

"The gun's all you need. A buckshot cartridge is good enough for bear or deer if you hit 'em right."

"I only hope I shall get the chance," said Dicky, fervently. "I've never shot anything bigger than a hare."

Unnoticed by Dicky, Bob Cherry exchanged a wink with Armitage.

"A coon gives better sport than a hare, I reckon," he suggested.

"What's a coon?" asked Dicky.

"A striped fellow about as big as a middle-sized dog. He'll beat a dog, too, in a fight."

"Do you shoot them?"

"Not unless we catch 'em in a chicken house. We hunt them with dogs."

"No, do you?" Dicky's eyes were aglearn with interest. "What sort of dogs?"

"Nigger dogs, mostly. Any nigger dog'll hunt coon or 'possum."

"And do you ride?"

"Not unless you've a mind to break your neck. We hunt 'em by night."

"Do tell us about it," begged Dicky.

"I guess there ain't much to tell. You just get a pack of dogs and a nigger or two and start out in the woods any dark night. Moonlight's no good, for a coon's afraid of his own shadow——

"Say, Randolph," he broke off, suddenly. "There's no moon to-night. How'd it be to take Mr. Green out for a spell after coons?"

"If Mr. Green likes to come along, we'll fix up a hunt in about two twos," said Armitage.

"It would be most awfully good of you," said Dicky, delightedly.

Bob Cherry finished a large piece of custard-pie in two bites, stood up, brushed the crumbs from his clothes, and was gone.

"He's a right smart fellow is Bob," remarked Armitage, admiringly. "I reckon he'll show you some sport to-night. Will you have a cigar, Mr. Green?"

But Dicky produced a pipe, and after he had lit his briar and Armitage a fat green cigar, the two went out on the verandah to await the arrival of Cherry.

It was not long before a yelping was heard down the sandy waste which Pinelake people called by courtesy Orange Avenue, and as Dicky sprang up excitedly, Bob Cherry reappeared, accompanied by five negroes and an equal number of dogs.

The latter were large, in colour rich tan, and of no breed known to Dicky. They belonged, in fact, to the class known throughout the South as "yaller" dogs.

Of the niggers two carried axes, one had a single-barrelled muzzle-loading gun with an enormously long barrel which was tied to the stock with a lashing of raw hide, and the other two were unarmed except for their sticks.

"Here's the outfit," sang out Cherry, cheerily. "You ready, Mr. Green?"

"Rather!" replied Dicky, knocking the ashes out of his pipe and jumping down off the verandah. "Where do we go?"

"Right out into the woods," replied Randolph. "I reckon we'll find a coon somewheres along by Cypress Creek, eh, Zeke?"

"Yo' bet yoah sweet life we do that, sah," replied the woolly headed Zeke, showing his ivories in a broad grin.

Ten minutes later they had passed the last house of the settlement, and the pine forest swallowed them up.

Where they were going Dicky had not the remotest idea. It was too dark to see anything except the tall, straight shafts of the pine-trunks rising on every side. But he was much too keen to care, and went stumbling along over tufts of wire grass and among clumps of stiff saw palmetto, taking his tumbles with the most serene good temper.

After a time he realised that they were going down hill; the ground underfoot became boggy, with pools of water here and there, and then there loomed up in front a huge forest of cypress, solid and black as a wall.

Suddenly the dogs began to yelp shrilly in the distance.

"Whoop!" roared Bob Cherry. "They're on a trail." And the whole party broke into a run.

"You keep right alongside of me," said Bob to Dicky. "There's some right bad bogs around here."

It seemed to Dicky that Bob was not hurrying himself. He and Armitage jogged along at a very steady pace, and soon the negroes were out of sight and almost out of hearing.

"Hadn't we better hurry?" he suggested, anxiously.

"There ain't no rush," said Bob. "They'll stop as soon as the critter goes down its hole."

"Oh, a coon goes to ground like a fox, does it?" said Dicky, whose knowledge of Floridian natural history was distinctly limited, and who had no idea that a coon was a strictly arboreal animal. Sure enough, the sounds of the chase became louder again, and presently they plunged into a thick grove of persimmon and scrub oak which grew on a little knoll not far from the edge of the swamp. Here Cherry and Armitage stopped.

Somewhere in the darkness ahead the dogs were barking frantically and the niggers shouting like wild creatures.

Cherry pulled up. "Zeke! Oh, Zeke!" he cried, shrilly.

The gentleman in question came bursting through the scrub, waving a blazing torch of resinous yellow pine.

Bob ran forward to meet him, and the two exchanged a few sentences in low tones.

Then Zeke came back to where Dicky and Armitage were standing, moving his torch to and fro across the ground.

Presently he stopped.

"Dis heah's de hole, boss," he said to Cherry.

Dicky, hurrying forward, saw the mouth of a good-sized burrow which ran slanting downwards into the sandy soil.

"Is this the coon earth?" he demanded, eagerly.

"The bolt-hole, Zeke reckons," explained Cherry, with a grave face, but a twinkling eye. "Now see here, Mr. Green, you take this net"—producing from his pocket a net like a rabbit-net—"and hold it across the hole. We'll go the other end, and rouse him out."

"But why not peg the net down?" suggested Dicky.

"Good land! He'd break it all to pieces. He's mighty strong is Brer Coon."

"All right," said Dicky. "I'll hold on to him. What do I do when he comes out?"

"Hold like wax and shout like thunder," said Armitage very quickly, and ending his sentence with a queer gulping noise, which, however, Dicky was too interested to notice.

Lying flat on his stomach, he adjusted the net over the hole with the greatest care, and while he did so the others hurried off through the scrub.

"Mind you keep real quiet," was Bob Cherry's last injunction. "A coon's mightily easily scared." Then they were gone, and Dicky was alone in the darkness.

The yelping and shouting died away, and after a while Dicky began to wonder what his friends were after. He fancied they must be digging, but though he strained his ears, he could hear nothing.

Still he stuck loyally to his post. The coon should not get away if he could help it.

He began to get stiff with lying so still, and at last ventured to move his legs a trifle.

A slight rustling sound became audible. Every nerve in Dicky's body tingled, and he lay still as a mouse. The coon was coming at last.

But after a minute or two he became conscious that the animal was not coming up from below, but approaching above ground, and as he strained his eyes through the gloom a small squat creature came moving straight towards him.

The clouds had cleared away, and the big Southern stars gave light enough to see that the animal was oval in shape and waddled along very slowly on four absurdly short legs.

Dicky gasped. "Great Scott! it looks like an animated dish-cover," he muttered.

The thing came straight for the mouth of the hole, but the moment it touched the net it stopped short and became absolutely motionless.

Dicky cautiously put out a hand. The tips of his fingers touched something cold and hard as stone.

"I—it's a tortoise—a blooming tortoise!" he gasped.

Then he rose stiffly to his feet, and turned the creature over with his foot. Sure enough, it was nothing but a good-sized tortoise of the kind known in Florida as the "gopher."

Dicky thought hard for a moment or two, and slowly began to smell a rat. He lifted his voice and sent a loud "Hallo!" echoing through the silent night.

There was no response, and strain his ears as he might, he could catch nothing but the shrill chirp of crickets and the occasional boom of a bull-frog down in the swamp. He turned and tramped through the brush in the direction in which the others had vanished.

Not a sign of them.

Dicky paused. "Had!" he said. "Had for a tenderfoot!" And being a youth of genial disposition, he burst out laughing.

But the echoes came back so queerly from the swamp that he stopped abruptly and began to consider what he had best do.

He quite saw that it was of no use to try to follow his false friends, and equally futile to attempt to find his way back. He had no more notion where he was than if he had been dropped from the clouds.

"Got to stick where I am till daylight. That's one thing very sure," he remarked aloud. And not being quite so verdant as his American acquaintance had deemed him, he felt in his pocket for matches, found a box, and, sitting down on a convenient log, filled and lit a pipe.

The sky had cleared, the dew was heavy, and soon he began to feel chilly. It occurred to him that a fire would be not only company, but comfortable.

Dry leaves and sticks were plentiful. He scraped together a pile, and soon a cheerful glow illuminated the moss-hung branches above and the grey palmettoes around him.

Presently Dicky found himself yawning. He looked at his watch. It was just eleven.

"More than six hours to daylight," said Dicky. "I can't sit on this beastly hard log all night. Don't see why I shouldn't have a snooze. Those big leaves look as if they might make a bed."

So he pulled out his knife, and with much labour hacked off a good-sized bundle of the tough palmetto fronds, spread them under the tree, made up his fire, and turned in all standing.

In five minutes he was sleeping as soundly as ever he had slept in his life.

He woke with a start. The fire had gone black out, and the first grey promise of dawn threw a dim twilight through the silvery mist which had risen from the swamp. Not a breath of air was stirring, and all was still as death.

Yet Dicky could have sworn that a noise of some sort had wakened him.

He lay perfectly still, listening with all his ears.

Whoosh! It was a heavy, grunting snort.

The sound had something vaguely familiar about it, yet for the moment Dicky could not place it. Only he knew that it was evidently made by some wild animal, and for the moment he was very badly frightened. So badly that he felt cold all over, and his teeth chattered slightly.

A stick cracked close by. This roused Dicky, and, mastering his terror with a strong effort, he slowly raised himself on one elbow. As he did so a head was thrust between two clumps of palmetto not five yards from where he lay.

The head was covered with black, glossy hair, and the nose was long and equally black. The pointed ears were pricked forward, and the eyes were very bright, and also, Dicky thought, very vicious-looking.

Now Dicky remembered where he had last heard that curious grunt. It was when he had stood in the bear-house in the Regent's Park Zoo.

For some seconds Dicky and the bear eyed

one another in absolute silence. Then, all of a sudden, the bear, which was probably quite as much surprised at the encounter as Dicky himself, reared up on its hind legs.

This is a trick which bears have when puzzled, and implied no specially evil intention. Probably, if Dicky had stayed where he was, the brute would have wheeled round and retired in good order.

But this, of course, Dicky did not know, and the bear, erect on its hind legs with its great paws balancing clumsily, looked so huge and formidable that Dicky fully believed it meant mischief.

Determined to sell his life dearly, he at once pulled his brand-new pistol and fired point-blank at the great shaggy chest.

Now a thirty-two calibre pistol with a four-inch barrel throws high, and Dicky, who had owned this particular gun no more than forty-eight hours, did not make sufficient allowance for the kick.

His bullet hit the bear, not in the chest, but on the nose, and converted it from a moderately peaceful and rather scared wild animal into a quarter of a ton of raging bone and muscle.

Dropping on all fours, it uttered a blood-curdling growl, and charged Dicky with agility amazing in so heavy a beast.

But Dicky with equal quickness sprang to his feet, and with one jump reached the shelter of the trunk of the oak under which he had slept.

As the bear wheeled Dicky let it have a second bullet, which, more by good luck than any skill on Dicky's part, shattered the bone of its left shoulder.

But even so the bear was far from finished, and really seemed to travel almost as fast on three legs as on four.

To Dicky, dodging madly round the tree-trunk, the world seemed all red tongue, gnashing teeth, and deep, furious growls.

But luckily for him he did not lose his head. In fact, the mere extremity of his danger steadied him, and presently his chance came, and he emptied the contents of the third chamber absolutely into the brute's mouth.

So close was his hand to the bear's head as he pulled the trigger, that its teeth closed on the barrel, and actually left their imprint on the polished steel.

The pistol was wrenched from Dicky's hand, but the bullet had done its business. The bear staggered, rolled over on its side, and, after a few convulsive grunts and struggles, lay still and lifeless.

The formidable brute stood erect on its hind legs. Dick determined to sell his life dearly.

Dicky's legs felt suddenly weak, and he had an odd sensation of emptiness at the pit of his stomach. He sat down flop on his log, and stared at the motionless body of his late antagonist. For quite a long time he sat there, while the sky slowly brightened in the east, and presently the sun hove its great red ball above the cypress wall, and its bright rays shone warmly through the mist.

At last Dicky got up, and, taking hold of the bear by the two front legs, tried to lift it. As it weighed somewhere between four and five hundred pounds, this was, of course, impossible.

But Dicky had no intention of returning without some trophy of the night's work, so taking out his big new hunting-knife, he set to work to try to skin the beast.

Skinning a bear is no light task, and so Dicky, who had never before skinned anything bigger than a rabbit, found it.

However, he worked away with a will, and had cut a tolerably straight line from chin to tail when a queer sound, a sort of muffled gasp, made him turn his head sharply.

Zeke, the nigger, was standing just behind him, with an expression of positively ludicrous amazement on his ebony face. His mouth was wide open, and his eyes goggled in a most absurd fashion.

"Good land, whar did you git dat b'ar, boss?" he stammered out.

"Shot him with my revolver," said Dicky, as coolly as though killing bears with a pistol was an everyday pastime.

"Yo' done shot dat b'ar wid a pistol!" said Zeke, so incredulously that Dicky was nettled.

"You can dig the bullets out if you don't believe me," he answered, sharply.

"Holy Moses, an' Marse Cherry done thought yo' was a tenderfoot!"

The man's words were balm to Dicky. "Oh, I'm not quite so green as my name," he said, with a laugh. "See here, can you skin him for me? I'll give you a dollar if you will."

"Jes' yo' lend me yoah knife, sah, an' I'll have dat hide off inside ob five minutes."

Zeke was almost as good as his word. In less than a quarter of an hour Bruin's pelt was stripped off, and then Zeke stepped over to the swamp, cut some lengths of tough grape-vine, and he and Dicky between them slung the carcase clear of the ground into the thickest part of the oak tree.

"We'll bring de wagon for de meat, sah. I tell yo' b'ar steaks am mighty good." And Zeke licked his thick lips in anticipation.

"Talking of meat, I'm jolly near starving," said Dicky. "How far is it to Pinelake?"

"Jes' two mile, sah. Marse Cherry, he sent me to show yo' de way home." And Zeke showed his teeth in a huge grin.

Dicky, considering that the less reference to last night's hoax the better for the sake of his own dignity, made no reply. He waited till Zeke had rolled up the skin and shouldered it, and then followed him as he stepped briskly off through the long shadows cast by the new-risen sun.

He was surprised to find how short the distance was to Pinelake. In little more than half an hour they reached the outskirts of the village. Then he stopped Zeke.

"You keep a bit behind me, Zeke," he said. "I don't want you to be in sight when I reach the hotel."

Zeke nodded and obeyed. By the low chuckle which proceeded from his cavernous jaws he plainly appreciated the situation to its fullest extent.

Putting on a very weary air, Dicky came slowly up the steps leading to the verandah of the "Magnolia." Early as it was, Randolph Armitage, Bob Cherry, Tod Hammond, the hotel-keeper, and two or three other men were standing or sitting about.

All eyes were turned on Dicky as he limped stiffly towards the door.

"Hullo, Mr. Green," said Cherry. "We thought you was lost. Did you get that coon?"

"Oh, I got the coon all right," replied Dicky, looking at Cherry with an air of innocent surprise.

"The mischief you did! One of the hard-shell kind, warn't it?"

A broad grin went round, but Dicky did not turn a hair.

"Hard shell?" he said, with a puzzled face. "No, it had hair and teeth and claws. It nearly ate me. I don't wonder you chaps were scared and cleared out."

It was Bob Cherry's turn to look puzzled. His companions, however, roared with laughter.

"I reckon the Britisher met a bob cat," suggested one.

"I don't know what a bob cat is," replied Dicky. "But this was a pretty big beast. It was lucky I had my pistol with me."

"Did ye kill it?" demanded Cherry.

"Oh, I killed it all right."

"What have ye done with it?"

"Zeke's bringing the skin along," replied Dicky. "Hi, Zeke, bring that hide up here. These gentlemen won't believe I killed the coon."

Round the corner came Zeke, bending under the heavy pelt, and, slinging it off his shoulder, spread it wide on the verandah floor.

"A bear!" gasped the hotel-keeper. "A bear, and as big a one as ever I seed in my natural!"

And Dicky, glancing from one to another of the faces of the men who stood round, felt he was avenged.

THE END.

THROUGH FIRE AND FLAME

A STORY OF GUY FAWKES DAY

By GUNBY HADATH

"WELL, Diggle?"

"Yes, sir?"

"You had gi-gi-given me your word!"

A surly mumble.

"You have bub-bub-broken it!"

To its audience this duologue was contemptibly familiar. So many times before they had heard its paraphrase stammered out on Mr. Manners' dais. So often, too, they had witnessed the spectacle of the big, clumsy youth kicking one toe against the other heel, while his heavy eyes rested sullenly upon the little master whose utterance was so amusing.

To the Sixth Form, then, both duologue and scene were alike monotonous; not a boy among them but could have told you how the two would end.

"Are you ash-ash-amed of yourself, Diggle?"

A sheepish grin.

Then, of a sudden and at length, a gust of interest rose and swept across the dull plane of the commonplace. For Mr. Manners had sprung to the height of his few inches to lay a nervous hand upon the big lad's shoulder. Contrary to routine, also, he was repeating the old question.

"Are you ash-amed of yourself, Diggle?"

His auditors recognised a new note of insistence that demanded a reply.

"Are you ashamed of yourself, Diggle?"

Diggle turned his head quickly, and shot a furtive, sidelong glance at his fellows where they sat behind him. They were watching him, all alert and eager for the upshot. He hesitated.

His answer came heavily:—

"No."

With a gesture of disgust the little master dropped back into his chair.

"Oh, sit down, sit down!" he sighed.

The Sixth Form sniggered. Diggle returned to his place proudly, with the air of one who carries off the honours. His companions appeared to share his satisfaction. But Mr. Manners leaned forward again.

"You're a cur, Diggle," he remarked, very quietly. "You've no sense of shame in you, Diggle."

At the beginning of that September term, some seven weeks before, Terence Manners had joined the staff of Alderbridge Grammar School. He was a small and weedy young man; he stammered; he walked with a droop; he wore round, ridiculous glasses. These visible defects, united to physical nervousness, served to conceal certain fires of enthusiasm which burned within him. He was fond of boys, and would tell you that they were all good fellows at heart.

But now that he had been some little time at Alderbridge he was feeling rather less sure of this. His eyes were opening, and he was learning that there are black sheep in every fold.

Nobody had contributed more generously to Mr. Manners' discoveries than William Diggle—"our Bill," as his parents were apt to call him. Surly and ill-conditioned, Diggle had been born and bred in the faith that masters were "beasts," natural enemies to be confounded and overcome. His code of honour forbade any acceptance of their advances. And because he was the biggest and strongest boy in the school, and because none of his compeers possessed sufficient firmness of character to oppose him, most of his fellows took their tone from him; and this was very bad for the Grammar School.

Of course, Diggle ought to have "known better." But he did not. So he followed his lights, such as they were, faithfully.

It should be very obvious, then, that to Mr. Manners "our Bill" presented an enigma highly disagreeable.

The Sixth Form had enjoyed the spectacle of the little master's emotion; but they were to be provided with a startling entertainment before the incident had closed.

Mr. Manners had remained in his attitude of anxious deliberation, watching the boys with eyes that blinked behind his glasses. Of a sudden he raised one finger, and began to address them. His tones were weary, but those of a man who has a purpose and is determined to pursue it.

"Listen, lads," he said, and his stammer was forgotten in the excitement of the moment; "listen, please. You appear to regard Diggle as a hero—I regard him as a cad!"

Here he waited, his class spurred to attention. At the further end of the long schoolroom the Fifth Form, arrested by the tones, were pausing, pen in hand. Their master, too, looked up from his book, listening.

"I tell you," repeated Mr. Manners, his voice rising, "that I look on Diggle as a cad. You fancy that he has done a great thing in trapping me into insulting him. That is like you. You have no idea of honour. You lie to my face, and think how clever you are! And, more than that—you're in a state of dry rot, all through. You have no *esprit de corps* at Alderbridge; you don't know what the term means. Yes, I remember!"—with an impatient gesture the speaker brushed aside a plea his honesty suggested—"I remember you are all day boys. You come here at nine and you rush away at four, and that's where your school life begins and ends for you. But it shouldn't. Oh, can't you see it, boys!"

At the far end of the room a book dropped heavily. Somebody laughed aloud; but Mr. Manners proceeded to his bitter end:—

"You don't even play football! Yes, I know—because you haven't got a ground! As if you could not have found one years ago! So there you go, and on half holidays you loaf. Just loaf about the place in your school caps. I want to kick you when I meet you, and I'll tell you why—because you look upon that cap as nothing but a piece of cloth to keep your heads warm. It's just a cap. It happens to bear your school crest; but it means nothing to you! That cap with the crest upon it means nothing, I say, to any of you boys who wear it!"

He ceased. Many of his audience were smiling in the amusement of condescension; others were tittering audibly, and nudging one another. It was ripping to draw "old Goggles" so. At the further end his grey-bearded colleague shrugged his shoulders, and recalled the Fifth to their Algebra. John Varley (twenty-ninth wrangler of his year) had served long and patiently at Alderbridge. For many terms now he had marked the steady deterioration in the school's tone which had grown with the rise of Diggle. But John Varley was no longer a young man, and he was too tired now to mend matters.

Perhaps, also, as he shrugged his shoulders, he was reflecting that the fault did not lie altogether with the boys.

From their first nervous interview with Dr. A. R. Lasswyn, LL.D., of the Grammar School, the parents and guardians of Alderbridge were wont to take away the picture of the ideal head master. Very suave, very courtly, clad in calm dignity. You bore yourself gravely in his presence; you would not laugh until he had descended to laugh with you.

Yes, Dr. Lasswyn made a fine figure and an imposing figure; it might almost be written a fine figure of imposture. He was always very busy—in avoiding personal exertion. He existed to pass it by. And in his heart of hearts he regarded his pupils as necessary evils. They came there to be endured. They were mild nuisances, who had to be taught things. (Happily, masters could be engaged for that!)

To this unfortunate fish out of water—for Dr. Lasswyn was never made by nature for a school-master—his boys were noisy intruders, to be kept as much as possible out of the way of Mrs. Lasswyn and himself. They must be instructed, he recognised—by his masters; and taught to behave themselves in school, and to wipe their feet before they entered his apartments. And when they had learned what they might in the time allotted, their duty was to get themselves away again. Finally—oh, yes!—they were there to look happy and applaud nicely upon speech days. Further Dr. Lasswyn was not driven to concern himself, and he drew the deep sigh of satisfied ambition when he heard the old gate that led on to the High Street locked rustily each afternoon upon the last of them. All his boys, as we know, were day boys.

The assistant masters were not lodged in the school, but hidden in such bachelor lodgings in the town as their means and the vicinity afforded. Apartments are not hired readily in

Alderbridge, especially apartments in easy distance of the Grammar School. Dr. Lasswyn disliked his staff to be very far away.

So it was in a poor little room in a shabby little street that you would have found Terence Manners and the mathematical master engaged somewhat languidly on an evening soon after the former's outburst in the long schoolroom. And this outburst formed the topic of their talk. The elder man reclined uncomfortably in a hard horse-hair chair (a poor thing to return work-weary to), the younger stood at the window, jerking up the blind.

"Yes, Varley"—his stammer need not be recorded—"you know what this street looks like in the daytime. It's narrow, and drab, and dirty. Every time I trudge it to and fro it reminds me of our Grammar School."

Varley smiled, moving one leg over the other in tired fashion. He felt a little piqued.

"Spare me heroics," he murmured. "I'm not one of the boys, you know."

He appreciated the sting of the other's disappointment more vividly than his companion may have thought, but his delusions were all gone. They had left him with nothing but a cold contempt for hysteria and "heroics." What good could Manners do by working himself into a passion against the school and its boys? Why make himself ridiculous?

"Two or three years ago, Manners," he continued, "when I saw this degeneration setting in under Diggle's lead, I felt like you. I tried once or twice to argue the boys into something better. I tried to persuade them into it. I tried to lead them. I very nearly begged them. But it was no good. And it's no good still, believe me. We'll never mend things till we've got rid of Diggle."

The other found nothing immediately to answer. Mr. Varley went on to finish his opinion, and to clinch the argument:—

"No, better drop it, Manners. You'll only put their backs up more if you rag them. Your little sermon of the other afternoon is all over the place already; every man Jack of them is talking about it. And they're all laughing at you. Don't be a fool, man. Besides—forgive me, Manners—you are hardly the build for heroics."

His listener turned from the window. The quick colour swept his face, and passed to leave it pale.

"I'm sorry, Varley," he said, "that I spoke as I did to you. But I'm not sorry, not a little bit, that I told the young beggars the truth about themselves. They want someone to tell them, badly. And now they're all talking of it, eh? Jove! I'd much rather they talked than let it lie!"

The news had whipped his voice into eager life again.

"Perhaps," insisted Varley; "but you won't like to hear them chattering about an hysterical donkey"—his eyes dwelt a moment on the young man's paltry, narrow figure—"and about other things more personal and less complimentary."

"What do I care—what do I care, Varley? I tried every means to make friends of them, to turn them from a mob into a school. I failed. But I've awakened them at last by telling them a few home-truths. I've hit them, anyhow. You're sure they're talking of it?"

Mr. Varley still smiled, but now he began to hum softly, a habit he had when his thoughts amused him.

"Yes," he said, "you've made an impression right enough. I'll tell you—it's rather funny—what I happened to see this morning. Up to school I was walking behind Briggs and Thomson, and one or two more of the Sixth. I heard them laugh, and mention your name. Suddenly they began snatching off each other's caps, and made a great show of inspecting them, as if they'd got hold of something very new and wonderful. I was tickled immensely; it was as good as a pantomime."

His companion kept silent.

"You know what a capital mimic Briggs is?" resumed the other, enjoying his narrative. "Well, when they'd got through the gate, Briggs whipped out a pair of motor goggles, put them on his nose, seized Diggle's cap, stuck it on an old stick, and went prancing round with the cap held at arm's length, bidding everyone to come and look at it, and to admire the 'bub-bub-beautiful school crest.' I couldn't help laughing. He'd got your voice exactly, old man!"

Again the colour swept over Manners' face, but he turned full to the window, hiding his confusion.

"And what did Diggle do?" he asked, quietly.

"What he always does. Diggle just stood and scowled. But there's no doubt, Manners"—and Mr. Varley laughed again at the reminiscence—"that what you said about the cap tickled 'em immensely."

"Well?" The tone was cold enough at last, quite passionless.

"Well? Oh, nothing, Manners. Unless it shows you that is just where heroics fail, my

friend. Boys don't see the point of heroics. Especially when——" And with a shrug of his shoulders and another quick glance at the bent form by the window he left the words unfinished.

Whether the junior had been persuaded to his senior's point of view we have no grounds to record, for at that moment Manners stooped and flung up the window.

"Halloa!" growled Varley, shivering a little in the draught, "what's up?"

Manners drew into the room again.

"Listen!" he cried. "Listen!"

It was the rising murmur of a crowd; the muffled shouting and the clamour and the many voices, deep and shrill, of men and women. Varley, who had sprung from his horse-hair chair, pointed a finger outwards.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "The sky's strangely bright! There's a fire somewhere!"

And then in another minute they had both begun to laugh together.

"Why, what asses we are!" roared Manners. "Of course there's a fire somewhere. It's a bonfire. We'd forgotten to-night's Guy Fawkes night. Come on!"

He turned for his overcoat. But the elder man was loth to be disturbed.

"Oh, you go!" he drawled. "I'm too comfortable. The Alderbridge folk are pretty sleepy, but they wake up properly on November the fifth. You'll enjoy yourself!"

Mr. Varley spoke lightly; but in one sense, and that other than he intended, his anticipations were to be realised. In the upshot Terence Manners did "enjoy himself!"

"Where will it be?" he asked, one hand on the door.

"Oh, up on the Hog's Back. They always have them there. It's a fair step, but anyone will show you."

Manners went off hastily, snatching at any diversion from his unhappiness, and he had put the little street at some distance before he discovered that he had left behind him those ridiculous round spectacles of his. However, he reflected, he would scarcely need glasses to watch a bonfire. It was awkward, though, to be unable to make out the names of the roads in this poorly lighted part; he wanted to get out of the town and to the back of it, and these rows of dwellings and small gardens were certainly confusing; they were none of them dissimilar. Like so many bolder people he was too shy to give others the trouble of putting him upon his way. So he thought of sailors and the stars to which they trust, and he set his course by the dull murmur and the glow in the sky above him, which was steadily perceptible, since the people of the royal and ancient borough of Alderbridge pride themselves upon the mighty bonfire which they burn on their Hog's Back when the fifth of each November comes round. (Has it not been featured in the County Guide Book?)

But a clamorous concourse afar, as it subsides from the first *fortissimo* of delight to the even *andante* of enjoyment, is not the best guide to its own locality. Nor are those who steer for a conflagration by its reflection in the sky altogether unlikely to find themselves away from it.

Certainly, it befell so with Mr. Manners. To the outskirts of the town he did arrive, and was rewarded by the spectacle of a lofty viaduct, where, silent and magnificent, it spanned dim meadow-lands. In the grey shadow-light the picture was beautiful enough; but at any other time Mr. Manners would have enjoyed it more. For it was familiar, and certainly not in the direction of the Hog's Back. Ah, but if he turned to the left and crossed that stretch of common beyond he fancied that a little steady walking must take him to the object of his quest.

A few hundred yards ahead of Mr. Manners, and on that same piece of common, another adventurous spirit was faring into the night. And it happened that he, too, was a member of the Grammar School; and one who never lacked for followers; but he had shaken them off that evening, dismissing them "to go and play the goat their own way." For William Diggle had no mood for company, else he would have chosen another route. He wished to get away from his kind, for he had a little thinking to do. And thinking was a tedious process with "our Bill."

So the body of William Diggle went slouching through the darkness, but the mind of William Diggle was standing on that dais in the long schoolroom, watching that little driveller Manners—how he hated him!—who had done his level best to make a fool of him! The cheek of the man! Preaching to him—Diggle—who knew his way about as well as anyone!

The little beast; thinking to make him look small before the other men, and talking to him as if he ought to be ashamed of himself! With his rotten stammer, too. How did it go? "You'd gi-gi-given me your word, Diggle. You bub-bub-broke it. Are you ashamed of yourself, Diggle?" Ugh, what bally twaddle!

Diggle went on; Diggle began to whistle—but he could not whistle his thoughts from the

schoolroom and the dais. "You're a cur, Diggle!" The silly goat had said that, too! All right. Goggles might see something one day. "You've no sense of shame in you, Diggle."

Diggle whirled the pole over his head, and kept the ruffians at bay.

Oh, indeed! That was funny, wasn't it? Very humorous!

Without a doubt "our Bill" was exceedingly upset. His self-pride had been touched (more than he knew, perhaps) and he nursed resentment. For it wasn't, he was arguing, like any common or garden bullyragging. He was used to that. But to be called a cur—a cur—in that nasty, quiet, deliberate tone by a hunchbacked little driveller, who was as blind as a bat, and couldn't say a word without slobbering it—and here Diggle's rage boiled beyond mental expression.

But his thoughts would return to the indignity, and so on to the "twaddle the little ass had gassed about the cap!" And that reminded him of Briggs, and his antics of the morning. Briggs! Well, Briggs wasn't quite so funny as he imagined, either! Briggs and his monkey tricks! Dash Briggs!

Diggle came to himself with a start, and breathing heavily; he had been climbing up, and now the track dipped down sharply into a hollow cupland. Yet it was scarcely shortness of breath that brought him so suddenly to himself, but the sound and sight which met him through the gloom below. He saw smoke-wisps beginning to rise above a cluster of dark forms, and he heard the crackle of new-lit wood. Then he knew that he had stumbled upon another bonfire; not the official one he had been leisurely making for, but one which the rougher element of Alderbridge were lighting to enjoy by themselves.

A rough element they were indeed, as Diggle found when he came nearer, and their spirits were rising high; or so high, at least, as the lips require of flask and bottle. For these spirits were of the tangible variety. Rude horse-play and coarse jest ruled, while the faggots spluttered and the fire began to take fair hold. Diggle drew near to watch.

Presently an errant tongue of flame, lustier than the rest, licked round the base, and darting upwards, serpent-like, plucked out of the darkness a vision of the guy upon the bonfire's top. For an instant only, and then the flame fell back again. Diggle started, and drew nearer, rubbing his eyes and coughing in the smoke.

Next, thick and acrid, the smoke whirled and eddied through the flame as if it strove to choke it; but now it was beaten, and the bottom of the clumsy mass began to burn more brightly. With this the guy became momentarily revealed—its outline grew harder and more distinct. And so gradually it disclosed itself, as foolish and unreal a figure as any of its kind.

By now Diggle had wedged his way to the front, and there he stood and stared awhile. Next he relaxed into his attitude of uneasiness, kicking toe to heel. By his side a huge fellow

in the moleskins of a gamekeeper kept greeting his cronies and stirred the fire ever and anon with a long pole that he carried.

Presently the boy moved, and plucked this fellow by the sleeve. He was pointing to the guy with an angry torrent of words.

"Rats!" retorted the gamekeeper.

"But I tell you it *is*!" shouted Diggle.

"All right, I hear you! But what if it is?"

"I won't have it," persisted Diggle, sullenly.

The man dropped the pole, and drew a bottle from his pocket.

"Here, mates!" he roared, and nipped the cork out with his teeth. "Here's a young cockerel who says 'e won't 'ave it!" He took a long pull at the bottle.

"Won't 'ave what, Alf?" screamed someone across the ring.

"It?" guffawed the man, enjoying his own joke. "It won't 'ave it! See?" He jabbed the cork back with his palm.

Then Diggle stooped quickly and seized the pole. He lifted it, dashing to the fire. But the gamekeeper was as quick; with one hand he pulled the boy back, closing the other over his precious bottle.

"Now, no larks!" he threatened, his voice rising angrily. "No larks, or I'll bash you—I will, straight! You drop that pole, mister!"

But Diggle was as angry as his captor.

"You take it off, then!" he roared squarely back.

"You—drop—that—pole—mister!"

"Aye, drop it, an' get!" snarled a third at his elbow. "You get. This ain't your bonfire! It's ourn!"

"I won't."

The gamekeeper saw that he would require both hands to force his will upon this sturdy customer, and moved to restore the bottle to his pocket. As he was doing so Diggle struck it out of his hand. It fell, and the glass shivered.

The rough swore evilly, and dashed his fist into the boy's face. Diggle went down, but he kept his grip on the pole.

Now Mr. Manners had found the hill a little trying, and had paused to rest more than once before he reached the crest and turned, blinking, to descend it. He blinked more at the sight and sounds which assailed him, and he wished that he had not forgotten his glasses. Peering ahead he made out a sway of struggling forms, and heard oaths and angry voices.

"Ah," murmured Mr. Manners, "a little private bonfire. But they seem to be quarrelling over it."

So he saw no reason to advance; the disturbance was no business of his. But neither did it occur to him to run away. He held his ground, and waited.

Presently in the rough and tumble he succeeded in distinguishing a thick figure which appeared to be keeping the mob at bay by whirling his arms about his head.

"Pity they can't enjoy themselves without *ruticuffs*," sighed Mr. Manners, and went a little nearer.

At last the fire burned brilliantly, and if the little master's glasses had been upon his nose instead of on his mantelpiece he might have made out the features of the combatants. But he could distinguish now that a long pole was in the whirling hands of the protagonist, and he heard it fall with a sharp clap upon the shoulder of a big ruffian in moleskins who pressed him the hardest. Then Mr. Manners saw the pole-wielder spring forward to the bonfire's edge, and thrust upward with his weapon at the effigy upon its top. He seemed to be trying to poke that effigy's head. Thus for a moment he poised it; then lowered it carefully, and in the strong light of the flames the watcher saw him pluck something small and black from his pole-top, and clutch it in his fingers.

"Ah—ah!" A foul word followed sharply, and with it the big rough, smarting under his blow, sprang on the lad's back and bore him down. He straddled over him, striking him again and again, and savagely. And the mob, in no danger to their own skins now, closed round to assist him.

"Gouge 'is bloomin' eyes out, Alf!" cried one, the little fellow with the snarl, "'er, let me at 'im!"

"Chuck 'im in the fire!" screamed another.

"We'll larn 'im, Alf!"

Mr. Manners started.

"Why, this is murder!" he gasped. And doubled down the slope.

And murder it might very well have been if the weedy little figure had not dashed stammering into the mob a minute later. For the roughs had lost their heads; they had been drinking freely, and heavy fist and hobnail boot have in such circumstance done murder before to-day. But this new arrival diverted their attention, and then brought them to their senses.

Mr. Manners was no fighter—he knew nothing of offence or defence; but he rushed into the *mêlée*, striking blindly to right and left, and calling on them to desist. So he stammered and struggled his way to the big brute in moleskins and, head bent low, charged into him. Astonished at this onslaught, the fellow turned

from his victim on the ground, and gripped his new assailant. His hands went to Mr. Manners' throat, he was bearing him to earth, when suddenly he relaxed his grip, and let the other free. In that instant, perhaps, he realised how near he came to doing serious damage. He drew off sullenly; and so, after a few whispered words with his companions, slunk heavily away. And the rest followed him, scattering into the night.

One less surly than his fellows helped Mr. Manners to raise the lax limbs and body which had borne William Diggle to so much disaster. The boy's eyes were closed, a trickle of blood stained his brow; his left arm dropped limply as they lifted him. But though the right, too, hung dangling underneath him, the hand was clenched tightly over something in the fingers.

"Why, it's a Grammar School lad!" exclaimed the stranger, as they carried him. "See! he's got his cap here, hidden in his hand!"

With the word he forced apart the clenched fingers, and passed the cap over to the little master.

Mr. Manners blinked at it. It smelled of fire; it was clearly somewhat charred, and had been smouldering. Then he looked more closely at their burden.

"Why, it's Diggle!' he murmured. And then, to his companion, "No, that's not his cap. Look, his is on his head still!"

"That's rum!" exclaimed the stranger.

But Terence Manners was recalling the picture of that heavy figure, as he had seen it silhouetted in the flames, poising its pole and reaching up to the guy. Reaching up and taking something from it.

"Yes," he assented, absent-mindedly, "yes, it is—rum!" But his own voice sounded strange to him.

And so very slowly they bore their burden back to Alderbridge.

Circumstances over which he had no control kept "our Bill" for three long months from his place in Alderbridge Grammar School. But he did not summons Terence Manners to his bedside, nor indulge in any symposia of hysterical retrospect.

For the first month he lay, and knew very little. For the second he lay, and knew pain. For the last he lay and knew—many things. And when one grey afternoon he was able to limp back to the long schoolroom, and it was observed that his right sleeve was pinned across his breast, he scowled upon congratulations and sympathy alike. And for a month or so while he was settling himself to alter a few things in Alderbridge Grammar School which had long required it, William Diggle continued scowling.

From the methods and traditions of the last three years William Diggle departed very abruptly. Too abruptly, at first, for that capital mimic Briggs, and one or two others; but happily his remaining arm proved strong enough to enforce obedience. So "our Bill" continued to set the tone.

The tone so set came as a vast surprise to a grey-bearded somewhat tired gentleman who had been twenty-ninth wrangler in his year.

"Eh, Manners," he would murmur, from the discomforts of a horsehair chair, "after all, there must be something in heroics. It depends, I suppose, upon the point of view."

"Yes, Varley, I suppose it does," the other would assent.

"Well, Manners, your heroics—or fate, or the two together—have made a jolly decent chap of Diggle, anyhow. And the old school's bucking up at last."

Now Dr. Lasswyn had been fully determined to get to the bottom of the story, as he told his wife, as soon as ever he could find the time. But, of course, Dr. Lasswyn was a very busy man. So it was not until the lilac was in bloom again upon his lawn that the head master found the opportunity to catechise the two principal actors in the drama.

"Well, Diggle," he inquired, glancing from the pages of the novel upon his knee; "well Diggle, what was all the fuss about?"

Diggle kicked his toe against his heel.

"The brutes were guying the school cap, sir," he growled.

"Were—*what?*"

"Guying our school cap, sir. It was on their guy's head!"

"Well?"

"Well, I couldn't stand that, sir," mumbled Diggle, in confusion.

Dr. Lasswyn raised his eyebrows and his book again.

"What an ado, Diggle," he sighed, "about nothing!"

"I dud-dud-don't agree with you, sir!" stammered Mr. Manners.

But there again, you see, so much depends upon the point of view.

MAGNIFICENT PRIZES FOR STAMP COLLECTORS.

THE COLLECTOR'S CATALOGUE AND ITS USES

THE stamp collector cannot properly pursue his hobby without a catalogue. He may accumulate a quantity of stamps; he may even stick them higgledy-piggledy in a book or album; but he cannot begin to classify them or understand them without a catalogue; nor can he tell what he ought to pay for this or that variety, or at what price he should be able to sell his duplicates.

Without a catalogue, in fact, the collector is like a mariner without a compass.

What a Catalogue Contains

The philatelic catalogue is primarily a price list of the world's postal issues, giving the prices at which the various stamps may be purchased from the firm of dealers issuing the book. But it is something more than that. It is also a collector's handbook and a concise history of philately. Here, in brief, are its principal contents:—

List of the World's Stamps

From Abyssinia to Zululand all the adhesive postage stamps issued by the world's Governments are catalogued, the lists being interlarded with hundreds of illustrations of the different types of stamps, making it an easy matter to decide to what country or colony this or that stamp belongs.

Values of "Used" and "Unused"

Attached to these lists of stamps are the prices quoted for the various items, both in used and unused condition, by the publishers of the book. These prices are accepted by collectors as a standard of market values, and thus the catalogue not only acts as a guide to the philatelist in buying stamps, but it also supplies him with a rough-and-ready means of arriving at an approximate valuation of his own collection should he ever desire to sell.

Minor Varieties

If a beginner's "simplified" catalogue is taken, one gets only a list of "standard" varieties—that is, stamps showing distinct differences of design. But in the more comprehensive catalogues used by the great majority of philatelists the lists include all minor varieties of perforation, printing, paper, watermark, and colour—those varieties which are the chief charm of the hobby to every collector who has passed the elementary stage!

Chronological Arrangement

The stamps of each country or colony in the catalogue are arranged in strict order of the date of issue; and this, to the young collector, is one of the greatest of the catalogue's virtues. Postage stamps, as a rule, bear no date of issue as part of their design—although there are a few exceptions to this rule in the early issues of Spain and Colonies and in various of the Central and South American Republics — and consequently without an illustrated and chronological list the collector would be absolutely in the dark as to how to classify his stamps and arrange them in his album.

Guarding against Forgeries, Reprints, etc.

In addition to the foregoing features, the catalogue provides copious notes as to forgeries, reprints, bogus surcharges, etc., this information being of undoubted value in saving collectors from the wiles of unscrupulous persons.

Simplified and Advanced Catalogues

There are two kinds of philatelic catalogues —the "simplified" book, which lists only the standard varieties of stamps; and the more advanced catalogue, which takes in all known variations of perforation, watermark, paper, printing and over-printing. The simplified style is quite good enough for the beginner—indeed, it is the best for him at the outset, for it has the great advantage of not perplexing him with a mass of technical detail. But it will not be long before this elementary guide is put aside in favour of the more advanced handbook, introducing the collector to those more subtle distinctions which are the real delight of the hobby.

Collectors in Council

Among the queries addressed to me by stamp-collecting CAPTAINITES are many of general interest; and in future I think it will be useful and instructive to deal with such questions under our new heading, "Collectors in Council." I shall attempt a full and sufficient answer to each question, but in some instances, where the reply is to some extent a matter of opinion, the co-operation of my readers will be invited. I hope in this way that all philatelic CAPTAINITES will be encouraged to take an active personal interest in this new department.

It should be added that all queries the answers to which will interest only the questioners themselves will be dealt with, as heretofore, in the ordinary correspondence columns.

The Rarest British Stamps

"Will you have the kindness to clear up a dispute between two friends? What is the most rare and valuable British postage stamp, and what is its value, unused? — *H. G., Nottingham.*

Now this is a hard nut to crack, especially as our friend H. G. couples the terms "rare" and "valuable." Oddly enough the rarest stamp is not always the most valuable. The penny and twopenny "Post Office" stamps of Mauritius are the most valuable in the world, but certainly not the rarest in a numerical sense. There are greater rarities in British stamps.

The "tenpence" head of Queen Victoria, with "emblems" watermark, for instance, is so very scarce that it does not exist at all in unused condition. But it must have existed originally, and at any moment an unused specimen may be discovered. The fortunate finder will hold in his hand a little scrap of gummed paper worth £200 sterling, and the "10d. emblems unused" will indubitably rank as Britain's most valuable postage stamp.

But "H. G." will not think it fair of me to cite a non-existent stamp as my reply to his query, so I will add that, among ordinary varieties, the £1 Queen Victoria with anchor watermark, unused, is the most valuable British rarity. An unused specimen is worth from £100 upwards according to its beauty of condition.

A stamp that is much rarer, numerically, than the "£1 anchor" is the sixpence King Edward with "I. R. Official" overprint. This value had only just been prepared for issue when the order came for the discontinuance of all British official stamps. One specimen, a used copy, was recently in the possession of Mr. Charles Nissen, a leading expert on British stamps, who sold it for a good round sum. Otherwise the only specimens known to me are in the possession of His Majesty the King, who owns a pair unused, and a single specimen in used condition.

Perforations of N.Z. Pictorials

"How can the 2½d. and 3d. New Zealand, 1898 issue, printed in London, be distinguished from those printed in the Colony?"—*C. W., Trinidad.*

Perforation is the test for separating the London from the Colonial printings of the New Zealand "pictorials." Those printed in London by Messrs. Waterlow have various perforations ranging from 12 to 15, including compound perforations. Those produced in New Zealand have a uniform perforation of 11.

London printing. New Zealand printing.

The Meaning of "Catalogue" Price

"I would like to know about 'catalogue prices.' I have a stamp which I bought for 6d., but it is catalogued 2s. 6d. Can you ever get these catalogue prices or anything approaching them?"—*J. S., Shetland.*

Full catalogue price, and sometimes even more, can be got for all really scarce stamps, *i.e.*, stamps priced from £1 upwards in the catalogues. The more valuable a stamp the more readily you can sell it, whereas for common stamps it is frequently a difficult matter to find a market. A rough-and-ready plan is to regard all stamps catalogued at prices from 2d. to 1s. as being worth about half catalogue; stamps above 1s. and under £1 as worth three-quarters, and above £1 as worth the full

catalogue figures. But of course there will naturally be many exceptions to a rule like this, especially in the case of unused specimens, where there may be a question of face value.

Stamps that will Rise in Value

"Can you please say what stamps are the most likely to rise in value in the near future?" —*R. S. S., Bristol.*

I cannot. There is, of course, a likelihood of a run on South African Colonials in view of a possible uniform issue for the Union of South Africa. Many people think that Brazil, Solomon Islands, Samoa, etc., are undervalued at present prices. Will not some of my philatelic CAPTAINITES come forward with their own pet theories on this subject?

New Issues

Iceland.—The newest postage stamp from the land of geysers bears an embossed head of Jos. Sigurdsson, an Icelandic celebrity, who was born in June, 1811. The watermark is the Danish crown, and the perforation 12½, 13.

4 aur, blue.

Indian Native States.—Two of these states, COCHIN and TRAVANCORE, have recently provided us with novelties.

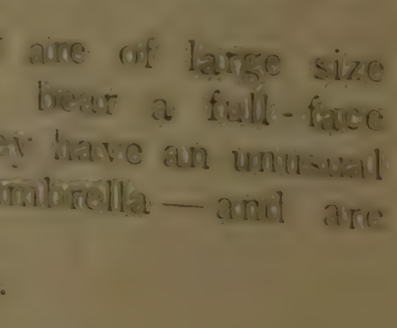
The stamps from COCHIN are of large size (28 × 22 millimetres) and bear a full-face portrait of the Rajah. They have an unusual sort of watermark—an umbrella—and are perforated 14.

2 pies, brown.
3 ,, blue.
4 ,, green.
9 ,, carmine rose.
1½ anna, blue.

The new arrivals from Travancore are of the existing "shell" design, but printed in new shades of colour:—

1 chuckram, slate.
½ ,, dark green.

Colombia.—There are three new stamps for the province of Medellin—small oblong affairs, lithographed and perforated 11.



1c., green.
2c., mauve.
5c., crimson.

Italy.—In issuing a set of four stamps to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the kingdom of Italy, the government conceived the idea of selling these to stamp collectors at a premium upon the face value, the said premium to be devoted to the expenses of certain patriotic *fetes* and celebrations. Who says the stamp collector is of no use in the world?

The four stamps are of large upright oblong shape and bear various allegorical and patriotic designs.

1c., bronze (sword and olive branches.)
2c., green (warrior and horse.)
5c., carmine (athlete and the winged horse of Apollo.)
10c., blue (the genius of Sculpture.)

Servia.—New stamps with a new head of King Peter are in course of issue at the time of writing, the following having come to hand so far:—

5 paras, light green.
25 paras, blue.

The stamps are unwatermarked and perforated 12 × 11½.

Thibet.—The current stamps of China have been overprinted with Chinese characters and various values in Indian currency (pies, annas, and rupees) for service at the Chinese post offices in the land of the Lamas. The values range from "Three Pies" on 1 cent, up to "Two Rupees" on 82—eleven stamps in all. There is still no need, however, to create a page for Thibet in our album. A corner of the section devoted to China will do quite well for these.

Album or Cabinet?

One is apt to think that the only possible way of housing a stamp collection is in an album; that is because the album was in universal use among philatelists for nearly half a century. The new way, which Messrs. Lawn & Barlow claim to be the better way, is to mount one's specimens on cards, which are filed within a special cabinet known as a "Cistafile." There is undoubtedly much to be said for the Cistafile system. Especially is it a good system for those collectors who are specialising a particular country, or group of countries, because it provides facilities for keeping a record of the fullest particulars appertaining to each individual stamp, and unquestionably the dust-proof cabinet does ensure greater security and colour protection for one's specimen than the average album. Readers of THE CAPTAIN who may desire to know more about the "Cistafile" should write to Messrs. Lawn & Barlow, 99, Regent Street, London, W., mentioning this magazine, when an illustrated booklet on the subject will be sent to them.

SPECIAL COMPETITION FOR STAMP COLLECTORS

FIRST PRIZE (Goods value Two Guineas) from Messrs. Whitfield, King & Co.

SECOND PRIZE (Goods value Thirty Shillings) from Messrs. Errington & Martin

THIRD PRIZE (Goods value One Guinea) from Messrs. Bright & Son

And a Magnificent Special Prize (value Three Guineas) presented by Mr. L. S. Charlick

AND MANY VALUABLE CONSOLATION PRIZES from Messrs. Lawn & Barlow, the Midland Stamp Co., Mr. James Rhodes, Messrs. Hamilton & Co., the Empire Stamp Co., William Ward, Mr. F. G. Rowe, Mr. J. E. Lea, Messrs. Lightbown & Co., and W. H. Peckitt.

For full particulars see "The Captain Club" Pages.

What You Have to Do

On this page are reproduced twelve incomplete postage stamps—that is to say, stamp designs from which some portion has been taken away or obliterated. Twelve more will appear in our December number, and a third set of twelve in our January issue, making thirty-six in all.

What you have to do is to say what country each incomplete stamp belongs to.

Do not cut the magazine, but write your solution on a sheet of paper, giving the number of each incomplete stamp, together with the name of the country to which you think it belongs.

If you cannot recognise some of the stamps on sight, search for them in your philatelic catalogue. They are all adhesive postage stamps, to be found illustrated in all complete stamp catalogues. If you do not possess a catalogue, get one at once. It will be worth while.

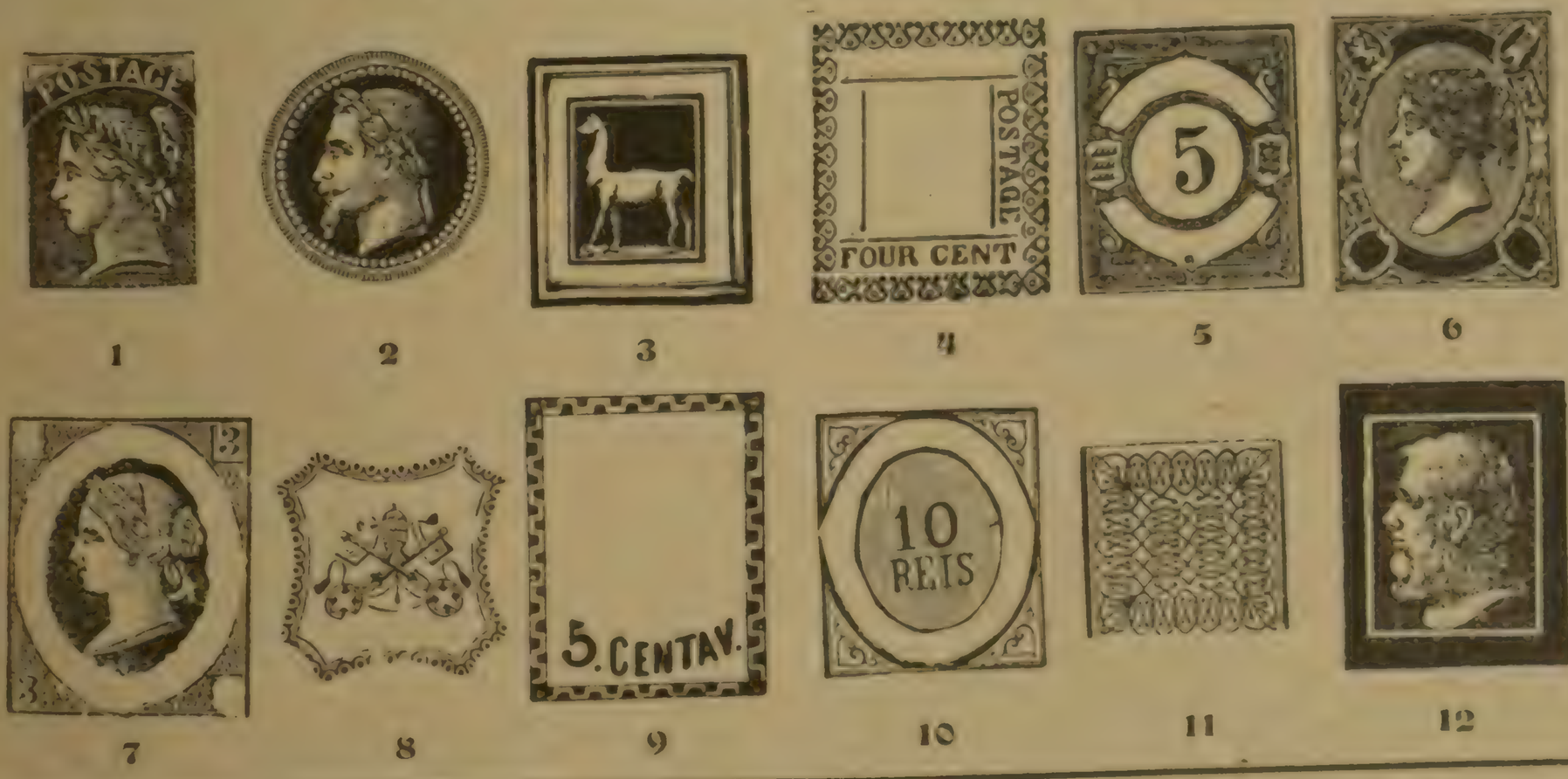
Do not send in any solutions until you have had the January number of THE CAPTAIN, containing the third and last set of puzzle stamps. Full directions how to send in will then be given.

A competition coupon from *each* of the November, December, and January numbers of THE CAPTAIN must be enclosed with the complete list of answers. If you want to have two tries for this competition you must, of course, send two *complete* lists, and a set of three coupons with each.

POINTS TO REMEMBER—(1) Only the name of *one* country must be placed against each number. A breach of this rule will mean disqualification. (2) This page is not to be cut, but a numbered and complete list of answers is to be sent in at the close of the competition. (3) Answers must not be sent in month by month, but must be kept till the last set of puzzle stamps have appeared, and then sent in on *one* sheet of paper.

The Editor's decision and awards in this competition must be accepted as final. In the event of a tie, neatness and age will be taken into account.

These are the Stamps you have to Identify.



1 2 3 4 5 6

7 8 9 10 11 12

This competition is quite simple, and every stamp collecting Captainite should enter it, and tell his friends about it.

All that is required is a careful study of a stamp catalogue. If you have not a catalogue, you will find many excellent ones advertised in our advertisement pages. They are quite inexpensive, and

THE PRIZES IN THIS COMPETITION ARE WORTH WINNING.

START THIS SPLENDID SERIAL NOW.

THE LOST EXPLORER

A THRILLING TALE OF ADVENTURE IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH.

By John Mackie

Author of "The Heart of the Prairie," "The Rising of the Red Man," "Black Man's Rock," "In Search of Smith," etc., etc.

□ □ □

FOR NEW READERS

ERIC JARDINE, the hero and narrator of the tale, has accompanied his uncle, Dick Jardine, into the wild, unknown country of Tropical Australia, ostensibly to take up new land for grazing purposes, but in reality to search for an aged white man who has been seen with the wild blacks in the unknown interior. This man, whom Dick Jardine once caught a glimpse of, is said to be the great explorer, Dr. Ludwig Leichardt, who disappeared with a large party when attempting to cross Australia from east to west some forty years previously. Although the Government had offered thousands of pounds to anyone who would clear up the mystery of his fate, no traces of the vanished party had ever come to light. Under the protection of Eric's party is a little native, Nick, whom the savages are very anxious to recover. Nick, however, pleads not to be given back to them. One night, after a fight with the blacks, while they are encamped in the Bush, Eric wakes to find that a deadly snake is poised on his chest and is about to strike.

CHAPTER X

A TERRIBLE FIX

WHEN I heard the voice my first thought was that some slight action of the speaker might alarm or annoy the venomous reptile actually resting on and poised over my body, and that, naturally, its first impulse would be to make short work of me. And what a horrible, horrible death!

I know that never in my life was time spun out as it was then. Such dread and speculation possessed me that the brain was working at a speed so utterly beyond anything one can conceive that hours of normal time were compressed into moments. Death in the form of those glistening coils and baleful, beady eyes was very close to me then.

I do not know why it was I did not either faint or shriek out, or do something that would have precipitated its action. I always had such a horror of snakes.

But my uncle Dick Jardine had seen my predicament, and cautioned me to lie still. What was he going to do? I was lying on my back, and could not see him; I dared not move so as to catch a glimpse of him. I thought he must be under his mosquito net.

Then I remembered that while snakes are quick to see, and to take alarm at the slightest movement, they frequently will not pay the slightest attention to sound. I recalled the Scriptural saying, "Deaf as an adder." I found my voice, and cried:—

"If you're going to shoot him, hurry up. He looks as if he were going to begin business."

"All right, Eric," my uncle shouted back. "Snakes have never been known to bite yet

as long as they are left alone. I'll blow his head off directly I get him in line. Keep cool, and have patience."

Keep cool and have patience! All very well for my uncle to say "Keep cool," and with that flat, evil, and repulsive head with death in its fangs within two feet of my face. Moreover, with its loathsome coils sprawling all over me.

"I've got to fire through my mosquito netting, Eric," cried my uncle in what I thought was a particularly leisurely voice. "You see, if I showed myself, the brute might take it into its head to do something. By the way, whose net is that on the other side of you?"

"It's Harry Maskey's," I replied, "but he's asleep. Can't you hear him snoring?"

My uncle did not speak for what I now suppose could not have been a minute or two, but which to me then seemed an age. He was, doubtless, endeavouring to get a good view of the reptile, so that he might shoot it, and at the same time aim clear of Maskey's mosquito net.

Then, just as luck would have it, Maskey's stentorian nasal notes broke into a series of violent snorts, ending with a regular explosion to which it would be impossible to find a comparison, and we knew that the sleeper had awakened.

"Hurry up, uncle! Hurry up!" I cried. "I'm sure the snake is going to strike. He's moving his head backwards and forwards."

I verily believe that venomous reptile had some half human sense, and that it derived some malign satisfaction in keeping me in mental and bodily anguish. In those few minutes I died a hundred times, and each death was such that no human tongue or pen can describe the agony thereof. It was the supremest torture. To me the serpent will for ever remain the incarnation of all that is evil and loathsome.

And then I heard the consequential bullock-driver sing out:—

"Hello, hello, there! What's all the blooming racket about?"

"Lie down—keep quiet, Maskey," cried my uncle. "There's a snake in Eric's bunk, and I'm going to shoot it. If you lie quiet the shot will go right over you."

"What!" cried Maskey. "You're going to shoot in this direction? No fear! You're not going to take no pot shots at me if I can help it. Just point that shooting-stick in some other direction, if you please."

"If you don't lie quiet, Maskey, you'll have to take the consequences," cried Dick Jardine, sternly. "Do you think I'm going to have the boy bitten by that snake because you're afraid of a stray pellet of shot? Down you get! Maskey, you're a dead man if you as much as raise an eyelid. Steady there!"

There was a flash and a roar. I saw the snake's great coils go whirling round and round in a confused series of circles like a rope that is being manipulated by a Japanese juggler. The moment the snake was off my chest I made a dart sideways from under my mosquito net with a sense of relief that it is impossible to express in words. But the snake, mortally injured as it was, had not done with things yet. It seemed only consistent with retributive justice that it should give the churlish bullock driver a turn. And it did.

Next moment the whirling and writhing reptile had crashed down upon the top of Maskey's net, and, managing to entangle itself in the thin muslin, it flopped and writhed, and laid about itself with heavy coils till the onlookers might have imagined that invisible hands were flogging the cranky one with a very substantial rope's end. To make matters worse, the old bullock-driver—who, of course, was partly undressed—got mixed up in the net and blanket, with the result that the snake coiled round the man, and hugged him as if he had been a long-lost relation. Had the reptile's head not been so badly injured it would have been an awkward thing for Maskey.

As it was, Maskey, who had not been in a position to note the effects of the shot, naturally imagined himself bitten when the snake threw itself upon him, and although he supposed it was only a question of time before he succumbed to his injuries, still, true to his truculent nature, he tried to grasp and punish that snake in no half-hearted fashion.

He yelled and indulged in abuse that was comprehensive to say the least of it. He rolled round the snake, and the snake rolled round him. He implored someone to come to his aid and help settle the reptile, and when he saw that the spectators who had gathered round seemed in no hurry whatever to help him, he became desperate, and abused all and sundry in a way that no one save a bullock-driver could ever hope to rival.

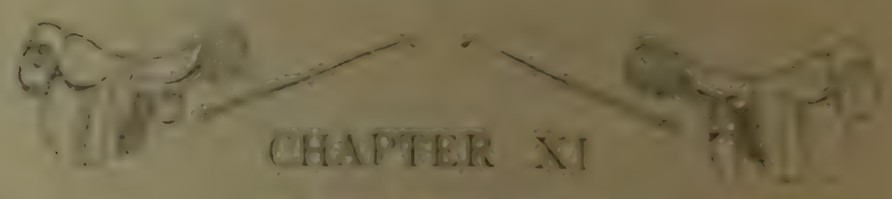
Despite the fact that the cranky one had not seemed to take into consideration my deadly peril when it was on the cards that he himself ran some slight risk from a stray pellet of shot, I had made an attempt to aid him when I saw how he suffered through sheer fright, but Hume, the Scotch horse-driver, stopped me.

"Dinna fash yersel'," said that worthy. "It'll dae him guid to taste o' death himsel'. It's the only way to bring a man like that to his senses."

It was the diminutive Nick who came to the bullock-driver's rescue. It must, indeed, have been second nature to the little fellow to act as he did. It certainly was no particular love or admiration for Maskey that prompted him to do it.

Nick watched his opportunity, and then when for a moment he saw the tail of the snake become motionless, he made a grab at it, caught it firmly with both hands, and managed to pull it away from its victim. Then, presumably to prevent it coiling round his own little body, he revolved slowly, swinging it at arm's length with both hands. What he would have eventually done with it is difficult to say, but at that moment Yarry, one of our black horse-hunters, ran up, and, deftly stepping alongside Nick, took it from his hands. Then, as if it were a large whip-lash he was manipulating, he gave it a sudden jerk backwards.

Chck, and the reptile's back was broken!



CHAPTER XI

IN HIS OWN COIN

BUT the snake incident had not closed: Harry Maskey, who had at first given way to his temper, and indulged in most reprehensible abuse after the fashion of cranky old Bushmen who pride themselves upon "being as good as the boss," and upon what they are pleased to call their "independence," now finding that no one was disposed to indulge him in his desire to have a row, suddenly seemed to remember that he had been bitten by the snake. Such is the effect of imagination that he immediately sank to the ground and began to moan. Hume, who, although fifty years of age, had never seemed to have grown up, and was as full of mischief as any boy, approached him with a look of sympathy upon his shrewd, solemn face.

"Has it bitten ye?" he inquired, with seeming anxiety.

Maskey was understood to say that he was certain of it, and tailed off with a tirade of picturesque abuse. I could see Hume's black eyes "snap" as the Americans say.

"Hoots, man!" said the Scotsman, "if ye've been bitten, where is the bite? I've got a razor——"

The bullock-driver winced. My uncle and I knew that we could safely leave the selfish one's punishment in the hands of Hume, only it would be necessary to see that the joke was not carried too far.

Then Hume noticed that Maskey in rolling in his shirtless condition had passed over a small stone which had created a slight bruise between the shoulders. To this spot Hume promptly drew his attention.

"And it was a tiger snake!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," cried Maskey in a broken voice, but with more than a hint of spite in it, "and you fellers stood and looked on, and wouldn't lend me a hand to help me fight the brute!"

"Steady, there!" said Dick Jardine. "You forget that when another was in danger you didn't trouble about him. All you thought about was your own safety, and when I come to think of it, if you had only had the gumption to roll sideways from under your net, you'd have been beyond the reach of danger. You've brought it all on yourself"—turning to Hume—"Do you think it possible to save Maskey's life, Hume?"

"Oh, do something — do something, for goodness' sake!" broke in the sour-visaged bullock-driver.

"If we can keep ye on the move for the next ten meenutes or so you may recover," observed Hume, thoughtfully; "the thing is to keep ye from going to sleep. Hand me that whip, Eric."

"Only in moderation, Hume. You mustn't overdo it," said my uncle.

Hume and another teamster called White promptly seized Maskey, and, supporting him on either side, hurried him off to an open space. A couple of grinning black boys followed. They did not love Maskey, and the whip that Hume carried suggested entertainment. Although I was undoubtedly disgusted with the late exhibition of the bullock-driver's selfishness, I followed at some little distance, hoping that Hume would not be too hard upon the cranky one.

To do Hume justice, I think he let Maskey off very cheaply indeed.

For a few minutes he made Maskey trot round in a circle, much to the satisfaction of the black boys whom he had so frequently bullied. When he betrayed an inclination to lag, Hume would crack the whip, and the long-legged one would start off again with renewed energy.

But Hume soon ordered him to stop, and led him back to the wagons. "I think he's oot o' danger now, sir," he said to my uncle. "If you could gie him a bit dose, I think he'd be all right."

Dick Jardine took the benevolent hint, gave Maskey something that he evidently appreciated, and the incident came to a close. The affair apparently did the bullock-driver a lot of good, for he was not heard to abuse the black boys for at least three whole days afterwards.

As the philosophical Hume later on remarked to me, it was only right that Maskey should realise a little of that pain his thoughtlessness often created for others. It was the only way a much-needed lesson could be brought home to him.

For three days we pursued almost a straight and uninterrupted course along the high banks of that magnificent river-bed, which here, as elsewhere, consisted of a great sandy

waste intersected by rocky pools, with tall, narrow ribbons of land running parallel with the banks, on which grew immense trees. The long pools of clear water contained many fine fish and crayfish, and when we pulled into camp we had some capital sport catching them. The country around and ahead of us was well timbered with many kinds of gum trees and other species. We were gradually rising to a higher level, and one noticeable feature was the long regular outcrops of rock, called by the diggers elfin dyke, that began to show at intervals. We were now in the really wild country—"beyond the fences," as the back-blockers say, and we would have to look out for probable attacks by wild blacks.

And every day our interest in what lay before us increased. What if that old white man who was practically kept a prisoner by the wild blacks should actually turn out to be the great long-lost explorer, Dr. Leichardt, for any authentic traces of whom the Government had offered a reward of £10,000? For the evidence as to Leichardt being still alive had hitherto been purely circumstantial. The story the big Queen had told might be that of another white explorer long since forgotten or lost sight of. Dick Jardine's recognition of him might have been purely fanciful. But, again, what if we should be the means of clearing up the mystery of his fate, and perhaps restoring the famous explorer and scientist to the world after his enforced absence of nearly forty years? How the civilised world would ring with the wonderful news! What a romance the whole affair would be! And there was, indeed, very good ground to believe that Leichardt was still alive, for had not Dick Jardine himself seen the aged white man, and had not the great black Queen corroborated his opinion concerning him?

I had been riding ahead of the others one morning thinking of these things, and had been pulled up by a twelve-foot outcrop of elfin dyke across my path, when, turning my horse so as to discover a break in the natural wall, I was suddenly nearly thrown out of the saddle by my mount shying violently.

The reason was only too obvious. A couple of spears and a boomerang whizzed past my head. If it had not been for the sudden alarm of my horse I might have been speared or stunned as I sat carelessly in the saddle. As it was, one of the flint spear-heads stuck in the neck of my poor horse. I could hear the excited jabber of black fellows. Next moment I could see them.

Holding the reins in my left hand I withdrew my carbine from its bucket with my right. Though the savages were a hundred strong I was determined not to bolt. If ever my blood was up, it was then.

CHAPTER XII

A DETERMINED ATTACK

MY horse, Eclipse, would doubtless have bolted when the savages showed up if I had given him a chance, for both horses and cattle in the back-blocks, by experience, are quick to scent blacks, and, therefore, danger. Savages are very fond of horseflesh, and, where cattle are concerned, they will kill an animal merely for the sake of the fat and kidneys.

As it was, Eclipse had shot off some sixty yards or so before I could pull him up and turn him. When I did succeed in doing so he was all of a quiver. But, to my astonishment, the blacks had left their vantage ground on the ridge of rock, and spreading out fan-like had run in upon me. I had to bend low in the saddle, turn my horse again, and give him his head to escape the spears that were hurled at me. It was touch-and-go with me that time, for one or two of them only missed me by the narrowest margin possible. One missile struck the cantle of my saddle and stuck there. I had yet something to learn about fighting blacks.

I galloped at least a hundred yards, then wheeled. It was quite evident the blacks were not aware that a party was coming up behind me or they would not have left the shelter of that ridge of rocks as they did. They, doubtless, could see I was only a boy—though a big one at that—and they thought that by their numbers and quick concerted action they could manage to spear both me and my horse before I could use my rifle. They probably realised that a bold move was their surest and safest game to play.

It was difficult to get Eclipse to stand, but I did manage to get him to do so for about half a minute, and in that time I contrived to cover a big black fellow who was coming on at a rush, and pull the trigger.

He pitched forward and rolled over all of a heap. But Eclipse wanted to bolt again, so I could not pump another cartridge into the chamber, far less take aim. Still I noted that my effectual first shot had somewhat cooled the ardour of the others, as they stopped on their onward progress, and some of them slipped behind convenient trees. It must be remembered that we were in what is called in the Bush "open forest country."

But, surely, by aid of a Winchester rifle with seven cartridges in the magazine, and thirty or forty handy in my belt, I could manage to stand off these marauders armed with their primitive weapons. Besides, my comrades could not be very far away.

Next moment I had jumped from my horse, and taken the reins over. It was annoying to think I could not shoot from Eclipse's back. I would have to teach him to stand fire at the very earliest opportunity.

The moment I had jumped to the ground I regretted it. A short waddy or club came whirling through the air, and gave me such a rap between the shoulders that I thought my back must be broken. A spear also whizzed past my head and stuck in the flap of my saddle.

That was enough for Eclipse, who jerked the reins out of my hands and galloped off through the Bush. It was comforting to note that he made back in the direction in which the wagons would come up. The annoying feature of the case was that I only got the merest glimpse of my assailants. An uplifted arm showing momentarily from behind a tree was not much to take aim at, and then I caught sight of several blacks scuttling from one point of vantage to another. I realised they were again closing in upon me. Unless I took a decisive line of action they would very soon have me. I ran rapidly to the left with my rifle at the ready, and, as I expected, I caught one or two of the blacks napping. They were busy looking out for me in another direction, and their bodies were exposed to view. They carried spears or boomerangs under their left arms, with one or other of these weapons poised in the right hand.

Bang, bang, and I let them have it one after the other. Both of the savages I fired at fell. I had not been a moment too soon, for, my strategy being discovered, the blacks raised a great chorus of warning shouts and began to retaliate.

For the next few minutes I had my work cut out. It was no good standing still with my back to a tree, for the moment I did so the blacks would close in upon me, and a regular shower of spears and boomerangs would bombard me from every direction. I kept dodging now to the right and then to the left, with the result that I succeeded two or three times in surprising them. They would be looking for me in one place, and I would manage to appear in another.

Still, during that time they were not idle. A spear with a jagged stone head had given me an ugly cut in the neck, and I was bleeding profusely. Half an inch more to the left and that spear-head would have severed my jugular. A short species of boomerang had hit me on the head, and only for my hat it would have given me an ugly cut. As it was, it made me feel queer for a minute or two. I was trying to rally my somewhat bemuddled senses when I heard two shots in quick succession some hundred yards or so in rear of me, and next moment the drumming of horses' hoofs.

Quicker than it takes to tell it, the horseman shot past me, and with his reins in his left hand, in which also rested the barrel of his repeating rifle, he was in amongst the blacks and shooting to right and to left as if he were a professional glass-ball champion giving an entertainment. Moreover, he was exercising a pair of lungs of truly remarkable capacity by giving voice to what sounded like something new in war-cries. Had I not seen that it was Dick Jardine I would have known it was he, for surely no other white man could boast of a voice like his. No wonder that gigantic woman, the Queen Regent, whom my uncle had told us about, had called him Thunder-Voice, and asked him not to shout so, as she feared he might make her deaf.

To right and to left he wheeled his well-trained horse, and so quick withal were his movements that the savages who at first had made a plucky attempt to stand up against him, speedily changed their minds; they only thought now of regaining the outcrop of elfin dyke as expeditiously as possible.

And all the time it seemed that my uncle was only having a game with them. The blacks broke and ran as I had never seen human beings run in my life. Some of them threw away their weapons so as to make better time. It was evident my uncle was not punishing them as he might have done, for I saw him following close at the heels of two sprinting warriors who, in their hurry, had obviously mistaken the direction of the outcrop. He was close upon them, and could easily have ridden them down; but he contented himself with giving a mighty shout. The runners leaped into the air with sheer fright, and increased their pace to an almost incredible degree. Despite the fact that the blow I had received on the head was making me feel just a trifle queer, I could not help laughing at the absurd sight, although it hurt me to do so. The funny thing was that my uncle seemed to derive considerable entertainment himself from the tactics he was pursuing. Dick Jardine, despite his experience and sound judgment, always reminded me of nothing so much as a great school-boy, for whenever there was any fun going he was just as enthusiastic and irresponsible as any boy could be. By the time the blacks had reached the ridge two of our men had ridden up to aid in the pursuit. Dick Jardine did not trouble further, and returned to me.

"Hello, Eric!" he said, somewhat anxiously, and jumping off his horse when he saw the plight I was in. "Not quite knocked out, I hope?"

But I am afraid the jaunty reply I attempted

came awkwardly to my lips, and gave me away, for I had to grab at a tree to prevent myself falling.

CHAPTER XIII

WHY THE SAVAGES SIGNALLED

IN three minutes more Dick Jardine had led me over to the sloping and wooded river bank, and down to a rocky pool. He filled his capacious cow-boy hat with water, then, bidding me bend forward he poured the contents over my head. This he repeated two or three times till I felt very much alive indeed, though somewhat in danger of being drowned. He examined my wound.

"A nasty cut," he observed, "but we can doctor that in two minutes."

He went over to a bloodwood tree which was exuding a regular spring of that dark, beautiful red gum which has such remarkable drastic and healing properties, and catching up some on the end of a stick, he applied it to the wound. It stopped the bleeding as if by magic.

"There!" he said. "It will harden; but don't take it off for a day or two. You will find then that the wound will be gone."

It was as he said. From that moment I suffered not the slightest pain or inconvenience from the cut. I almost forgot I had one.

"We will go back and see to the wagons and horses," said my uncle. "The others can tune up the blacks a bit, though I'm afraid that when once they get amongst the rocks they are as good as lost. Lucky for you we were so near at hand."

We found that Eclipse had made back to the little band of spare horses that were being driven by our black boys. Fortunately the wound that he had received was not dangerous, and Dick Jardine promptly stitched it together with some kind of gut.

The blacks rushed in upon me, and I had to bend low in the saddle and race for life, for the spears were hurled all about me

"I'll give Eclipse a few lessons in standing fire before you ride him again," he said. "In the meantime you'll ride Barney. You can lay the barrel of a rifle between his ears and fire, and he'll not as much as wink."

By the time those of our party who had gone after the savages gave up the chase, the latter had left three or four of their number on the ground.

When questioning me about the affair, my uncle asked:—

"I suppose you didn't recognise that fellow Possum amongst them, did you?"

I could only answer in the negative. But then it was not easy to pick out individuals when one was rushed.

"I've got an idea," continued Dick Jardine, "that these blacks would certainly not have been there unless someone had placed them at that spot for some special purpose. I rather think it was Possum's doing, and that his idea was to get Nick killed or into his possession again, which, of course, would mean much the same thing."

That explained the whole situation. The attack was only an abortive attempt to regain possession of the little fellow who was heir to the chieftainship of the Yucula blacks. The dangerous and scheming Possum, like the wicked uncle in the play, wanted everything for himself, and had posted these disaffected ones at that favourable spot to look out for a small black boy who, as likely as not, would be straying apart from our party with a boy-like desire to discover nests of bees with stores of honey, or succulent little bandicoots in tufts of grass, or queer little frilled lizards, or something of a nature likely to appeal to and attract his youthful mind. Their orders would be to dispose of that small boy quickly and effectively. But when I had come instead, dawdling along looking for all the world like an animated target, and as if I had been specially sent there for killing purposes, the temptation to kill me was too much for those children of Nature, so they had forgotten their orders and attacked me.

As Dick Jardine observed, some of them would get into trouble for having disobeyed orders. If Possum happened to be in the immediate vicinity himself—and in all probability he was—he would naturally keep well out of sight. Not that he was exactly a coward—for that he was not—but because he knew he was a marked man and would expect no mercy if caught at his little games again. Moreover, he was playing for big stakes, and it would be silly to run unnecessary risks. More than likely he looked forward to the day when he would be able to pay back the Fat Queen Regent with interest for her high-handed treatment of him. As for her husband, the nominal ruler during Nick's minority, he, Possum, would very soon contrive to put him out of the way when the right time came.

That day we continued to travel until after the moon rose, so as to put as many miles between ourselves and the savages as possible, in case they should take it into their heads to rally and stampede our horses. Indeed, they might even make another attack upon our camp.

"I wanted to avoid having trouble with those blacks," said Dick Jardine as we sat in the moonlight having our supper that night. "You see, news travels far and fast amongst savages, and there is no saying how that villain Possum may twist it about to our prejudice. We don't want to do anything that may rouse the resentment of the main body of the Yuculas, and so perhaps prejudice the safety of the old white man—presumably Dr. Leichardt—who is their prisoner. That would be a calamity indeed."

That night we kept watch by turns, but with the exception of one or two dingoes, or wild dogs, which were heard howling round the camp, the night passed quietly. Next morning Snowball, one of our black boys, calmly told me that the supposed dingoes had been black fellows reconnoitring and signalling to each other, and Dick Jardine and Hume corroborated his statement. They had also heard the eerie cries, and had kept awake, but had refrained from disturbing the other sleepers, as they knew that when the blacks make up their minds to attack they generally proceed to business in dead silence.

For the next several days we saw no more blacks. If they were still in the neighbourhood they were too cunning to show us even their tracks. But one day, as Dick Jardine and I rode on ahead, and ascended a hill to have a look around, we saw at a distance of a couple of miles or so a column of smoke rise straight into the still air. Then it suddenly was broken off short at the base, and, lo and behold, a series of rings of smoke arose in its place. They soared up into the clear and undisturbed atmosphere, and showed at a considerable altitude in exactly the same formation as that in which they had started from the ground.

The process seemed to be repeated, only I noted that the rings of smoke varied in size, and that their numbers, which also varied between the intervals, were evidently indicative of a well-defined code.

"Look," said my uncle, "that is the blacks signalling to one another. It is a species of visible Morse code with well-defined dots and dashes. It can be seen and read at a great distance in this clear atmosphere."

"I suppose these blacks have seen us," I said, "and are telling the other blacks at a distance that we are coming?"

"Quite so. They do it by placing a skin or hide quickly over a fire with damp grass in it, which, of course, produces a dense smoke. When one comes to think of it, it is only another form of heliograph used in war time, with this advantage—that they don't have to ascend to a height to use it. But keep a look-out; we are pretty sure to see that signal repeated at some distant point."

And, surely enough, within five minutes we saw at a distance, which could not have been less than several miles, that series of smoke rings repeated. They rose to an immense height before they were finally dissipated by the higher air currents.

"Before the sun goes down," said my uncle, "the main body of the Yuculas some few hundred miles away will probably have heard all about us. They will have a very fair, if not an exact, idea of our nature and strength. We Britishers have a pretty tolerable conceit of ourselves, but some of the things we claim the credit of having invented, and instituted, were used by the savages ages ago."

"But, Uncle, I don't suppose there is anything they know that we don't. That is to say, anything at all wonderful."

"Putting on one side their infinitely superior knowledge of the habits of the living things around them, they have the boomerang," said my uncle. "No civilised nation has any weapon half as wonderful, and I never met any scientist yet who could explain its principle. I fancy they got the idea from some hint of Nature—a falling leaf of a peculiar shape or something like that. As it is, they can make the boomerang soar through the air in a straight line like a bird for a couple of hundred yards or so, then suddenly return and describe a great circle high in the air over the head of the person who has thrown it, and then flutter in mid-air, and fall at the feet of the thrower. But we must be getting back."

We returned to the others and camped for the night.

Next morning I went out with Maskey on foot to try to find two of the spare horses which had strayed away from the main mob. We must have gone at least a couple of miles following their tracks, which led through a narrow gap in a low range of wooded hills, when, without any warning whatever, a number of dusky figures sprang up on either side of us, and in a flash we realised we had been cleverly ambushed by the savages.

There had been more in those signals of theirs on the previous day than we had imagined.

CHAPTER XIV

THE AMBUSH

"TRAPPED!"

I glanced around for a place we could put our backs to so as to keep the savages at bay. But we were too late. I had drawn my revolver instinctively at the first signs of danger, but as I levelled it at the nearest black, a club thrown by someone behind me struck my right elbow, causing me to drop my only weapon of defence as if my arm had been suddenly paralysed.

As for Harry Maskey, the chronic growler, he had not taken any sort of weapon out with him. He was one of those unfortunate mortals who are always contributing to what they seem pleased to call their ill-luck. Indeed, the only time some people seem satisfied with things is when they can convince anyone that the waters of adversity are closing over their heads. But there was fight in Maskey for all that.

At the same moment as a rush was made upon him by the blacks, he clenched his fists and put up his hands in a manner savouring of professionalism. There can be no disputing the fact that the average Australian Bushman glories in a pugilistic encounter.

"Come on, you kangaroos!" he cried, joyously, as the blacks rushed upon us, obviously with the intention of capturing us alive.

I had picked up a stick, and with my back to an ant-heap was laying about me for all I was worth. As for Maskey, however great his fear may have been of death by snake-bite, he was very much at home when it came to fighting human beings. He was a tall, bony, loosely jointed man; indeed, all bone and muscle. When he struck out with one of his huge, hard-knotted fists, whatever it came in contact with was instantly done for. *Smack, smack, smack!* and as he smote right and left the niggers went down with broken heads and limbs as if they had been as many puppets or ninepins.

"Come on, Eric," he cried. "We'll wallop the whole caboodle of them if they'll only give us half a show. Take that, and that, and that, ye black thieves!"

And as he spoke he succeeded in catching a black fellow of somewhat slighter build than his fellows by the nape of the neck and the left ankle, and using him as a sort of weapon of offence. He fairly bombarded the enemy with him. I am not likely to forget the astonishment and abject terror of that unfortunate human battering-ram.

But I was in sore straits. I had learned

boxing in Townsville, but that availed me little confronted with the rough-and-tumble tactics of the savages. My stick was soon wrested from me. For a few minutes so vigorous was Maskey's onslaught that the blacks were principally concerned in keeping out of the way. Once, when a savage was lifting a waddy with the evident intention of hitting me over the head with it, Maskey caught sight of him, and, lifting up a long leg with a ponderous hob-nailed boot at the end of it, he let the savage have it with such force and promptitude that the club remained suspended aimlessly in air, and the savage shot past me with his mind fixed on other things. The enemy cannoned into another savage, and the two—if they survived the shock—are now, doubtless, deadly enemies.

Only that these savages had been ordered to take us alive, we must soon have been speared or knocked on the head by the clubs or stones. As it was, the fight against such odds could not last long, and it was obvious the blacks were fast becoming desperate. I was wondering what horror they were reserving for us, when the situation was made plain by the appearance of the arch-villain Possum. He had, as usual, kept in the background while his evil commands were being carried out, but seeing that owing to the vigour of the cranky stockman's resistance his plans were liable to miscarry, he had put in an appearance himself so as to direct matters.

When Maskey caught sight of him, he recognised the author and instigator of all the trouble, and the blood of old grandfather Johnnie Maskey of the Barwan or Brewarina River, ran hot in his veins. With a series of mighty punches that cleared a path for him, and a rush that certainly took Possum by surprise, he was beside that crowing savage before one could say Jack Robinson.

The wily black fellow had reckoned without his host. He had not thought it possible for any white man to use his fists in such a fashion, and he had thought himself perfectly safe in the background. So when he had seen that the two whites were minus their firearms, he showed himself. Maskey lowered his head and ran full tilt into him. Possum, taken by surprise, was promptly doubled up, and sent spinning several paces away, where he lay writhing under the impression that his wicked life was fast drawing to a close. The worst of it was that he was much too ill to retaliate or to order the instant execution of his assailant.

But the struggle was an unequal one. In another minute the savages had rushed in and borne us to the ground. To Maskey's great surprise we were not instantly dispatched, for as a general rule the blacks of Australia do not take prisoners, but at once put their victims to death. Before Maskey was secured he had made shuttlecocks of several black fellows, and knocked them about in a manner that it is safe to say they would remember as long as they lived.

Two minutes more and the struggle was over. Maskey's arms were tied behind him with many strands of native-made cord, and I had my wrists encircled by a species of green-hide rope. They seemed to hold me comparatively cheaply, but this was doubtless because, on Maskey seeing that further resistance on our part might only imperil our lives, he had cried to me to "chuck it and go quietly." I thought his advice somewhat contradictory, for, as he gave it, he promptly struck out and succeeded in catching a particularly aggressive savage such a mighty whack with his piston-like arm and fist that I made sure he had broken the neck of the unhappy savage. But the primitive black fellow, with his coarser organisation, is more tenacious of life than the highly civilised and more delicately constituted white man, so can stand with comparative equanimity punishment that would prove fatal to the latter. It was, therefore, with no slight amazement that I saw several of the enemy whom I thought must have been killed, pick themselves up, and turn to what was on hand as if nothing had happened. I was gladder than I can say to see this, for I feared that they might revenge themselves by paying us back with interest.

As for Possum, I could not help noticing that his unenviable condition, caused by the painful state known as loss of wind, did not evoke much sympathy from the savages. Indeed, though they took very good care that Possum should not see them, their surprise at the redoubtable one's condition was supplemented by distinct signs of gratification in the form of covert grins, winks, and extraordinary grimaces.

"Look," said Maskey, a peculiarly wry and disgusted expression spreading over his grotesque and irregular features. "There's that old villain of a canybile a-coming to! Crikey, if this ain't wretched luck!"

I could not quite trace the connection between his two statements, but I could not help saying that I thought we might consider ourselves jolly lucky at finding ourselves alive.

"Alive!" groaned the misanthropic one now that his opportunity for showing fight had passed. "Alive! Yes, that's the unfortunit part of it, sez I. If we'd only been killed right out now, we might have considered ourselves lucky. As old Grandfather Johnnie——"

"But, Maskey," I interrupted, "how could we consider anything lucky if we were dead?

I picked up a stick, and laid about me for all I was worth. Maskey struck out with his huge fists, and niggers went down right and left.

I can't quite see that the fact of our being alive is anything to be particularly sorry about. And as for your grandfather——"

"And he was a man—one man in a thousand—that's what Grandfather Johnnie was!" broke in the despondent one with that delightful irrelevancy that characterised his utterances. "But just you wait and see. They hain't done with us yet by a long chalk, you can bet on that. Just you wait!"

Mr. Maskey assumed such an oracular and mysterious air that despite my desire not to encourage him in his gloomy views upon our present fix, I could not help asking him what was likely to come by our waiting.

"They're canybiles, them fellers," replied the stockman, with what I thought was a species of ill-disguised pride in the startling information. "They scoffed Uncle Bill Maskey, they did. Ate him up all but the nails in his boots and the buttons on his moleskins, the beggars did. Leastways, so Grandfather Johnnie told us."

CHAPTER XV

IN SAVAGE HANDS

DESPITE the very serious fix we were in I could not help laughing at Maskey's statement, more so as it was evident he seemed to derive a certain amount of satisfaction from his ghoulish reflections.

"You're laughing," he said, with the face of a judge who has just sentenced a man to death; "but it's not 'xactly a laughing matter, leastways not quite. I've heard as how them blacks bury folks alive. But I think that's 'xaggerated, seeing as how it 'ud be a waste of good tucker. No, it's their stock-pot that'll see the last of us. You can bet on that."

Had I at that moment seen the stock-pot in question being got ready I could not have restrained the absurd laughter that again seized me. The gloomy-minded stockman was surpassing himself.

But Maskey seemed in no way put out. I suppose he thought that nothing on earth mattered now. As for the savages, to say that they were astonished and puzzled at this exhibition of my ill-timed levity would be putting it mildly. They crowded around and eyed me strangely. Even Possum, who had recovered his wind, and was coming towards us with a nulla-nulla in his hand and a wicked look on his face, paused and watched me. I was at a loss to account for the passive attitude of the blacks until Maskey, who was by no means unobservant, mystified me by suddenly exclaiming:—

"Keep it up, Eric. Keep it up. I didn't drop to it at first. You're flyer than I thought. I'll try it on, too!"

I was obliged to confess that I did not quite divine his meaning.

"Gammon!" he grunted. "Don't you tell me you don't know that if them fellers think you're silly they'll leave you precious well alone!"

I understood what he meant now. Savages pretty well all the world over have a species of superstitious dread of those who are mentally afflicted, and will on no account harm them. My strange conduct had led them to doubt my sanity. This so exercised me that I laughed immoderately.

As for Maskey, I was hardly prepared for his next move, though he had to a certain extent led me to expect it. He evidently desired to be taken for an idiot also, and at once began to make the most hideous grimaces it was possible to imagine.

But Possum had evidently no intention of being taken in by such tactics as the stockman employed. He sidled towards us, then, unexpectedly snatching a club from a gaping warrior, he poked it into the spot in Maskey's anatomy which by recent experience he knew was a very vital one indeed. "Shoo!" he exclaimed in broken English, "silly fellow you!"

I never in my life saw anyone retaliate so promptly as my mournful friend. His legs had not been tied, so by some clever acrobatic feat he leaped to his feet without the aid of his hands, and with a powerful kick sent the arch-villain head over heels. Possum in his backward progress tripped over a low ant-hill, and came down with such a thud that I thought he must fly in pieces.

It came as a decided surprise to me that we were not instantly rushed and killed. The blacks simply grinned with delight, and indulged in an eloquent pantomime which expressed their entire appreciation of the summary performance. That Possum was not popular was very obvious, although it was evident that the blacks individually stood in fear of him. He was a tyrant indeed, whom they hated, but hitherto his prowess and cunning had been too much for any movement against him. To see him floored in such a fashion by a man whose hands were tied behind his back was refreshing, to say the least about it.

"I'm afraid you've killed him, Maskey," I said as I watched the prostrate and inert body of Possum.

"Kill him!" snorted the stockman. "You might as well try to kill a tortoise with a peacock's feather! He's got no sich luck."

"Then you think we're going to have all

the luck?" I said with a half-hearted sort of admiration for the gloomy one's consistent pessimism.

"You're young and tender," said Maskey, eyeing me critically and glumly, "but I'm a tough old carkis. Being canybiles and judges you can bet they'll tackle you first."

"You're a Job's comforter," I exclaimed. "But you're right about Possum. Look, he's coming to."

And, surely enough, for a second time the villainous savage pulled himself together and rose slowly to his feet. To me it was almost uncanny to see one who had received such punishment recover so quickly. A white man would certainly have been killed outright.

I thought the first thing Possum would do would be to pick up some barbarous instrument and make an onslaught on Maskey. But he did nothing of the kind, and his hang-dog and furtive manner were to me even more ominous. It was evident he meant to bide his time to seize his revenge, and then he would take it with a vengeance. There was no devilry he would stop at.

It was evident the blacks were deliberating as to what they should do with us, for they all began to talk at once. In order, I suppose, to recover some of his old prestige, Possum, with a club, promptly knocked down a couple of elderly savages who had doubtless dissented from his views. They might not have expressed any decided opinions whatever, but Possum had seen the necessity of impressing the crowd.

And then we heard a distant shot in the direction of our camp, and that brought matters to a head. Some advice given by Possum seemed to commend itself to them. We were seized by the mob and hurried in the direction of the river by way of the ironstone ridge. This was doubtless to confuse any pursuers by the absence of tracks. The river was not more than a mile distant. It was no use resisting, for the savages all carried deadly ironwood clubs and ugly bone-barbed spears, and we knew they would make short work of us if we gave them any more trouble. We were hurried along revolving schemes for escape in our brains.

And now Possum's cunning was made manifest. Arrived at the river we saw a long, narrow pool of water stretching to the south-east almost as far as the eye could reach. Into that we all waded. A dozen blacks went straight on and out again on the opposite side. We faced up the river, and were forced to splash through the shallows.

"The cunning haythen!" exclaimed Maskey. "D'ye twig their game?"

"I think I do now," I replied. "We're keeping in the water so that our tracks may be lost, and we'll come out again at some rocky bar farther up."

"But that's only a little bit of their game," commented Maskey. "They've sent those niggers out on the other side so's to lead our lot off the scent. Your uncle will nat'rally think we're being carried off by that lot, and will follow them up, but them niggers will double on their tracks and manage to disappear without leaving any tracks at all."

"Do you think there's much chance of our people finding out where we are?" I asked.

"How can they when we're covering our tracks up like this?" grinned Maskey as if rather proud of being part and parcel of such an effectual scheme.

It was one of the hardest pieces of work struggling through that sand and water I ever had in my life. But the savages kept us to it. A mile or so farther up we struck into a narrow creek, the mouth of which was screened by dense foliage. Graceful tree ferns and feather palms grew everywhere. Over our heads the branches of the trees met and were matted together by creepers. In some places it was almost dark. For another mile or two we followed up the bed of the stream, which at length became a torrent or gorge cut through what seemed to be a rocky hill or ridge. The sides grew higher and steeper, then all at once an amphitheatre-like basin lay before us, and we caught sight of a large number of blacks and a score or so of native huts, or mia-mias.

"Eric," said Maskey, almost cheerfully, "we haven't got much furder to walk. They've got lots of good fires a-going; and twig their native ovens! But I'm going to kill that ingyrubber beggar Possum yet before they puts us into one of them."

CHAPTER XVI

OUR WONDERFUL PRISON

I THOUGHT it was more than likely that Possum would try to kill Maskey, for, after all, the latter could not always be on his guard against the tricks of the treacherous savage. One thing I will say for the bullock-driver, he had unbounded faith in himself, and was always ready to engage in a scrimmage of any sort upon the very slightest provocation.

"My word!" said Maskey, as he looked around, "if this is where them niggers live when they're at home, I should say they're in safe quarters."

"This is the sort of place that in a civilised part of the world they'd call the Devil's Punch Bowl," I remarked. "It must be half a mile

across in any direction one likes to take it, and that cliff must be 300ft. high at least."

"A goat might have a chance," observed Maskey, reflectively regarding the scarped and broken sides of our natural prison, "but not poor two-legged creatures like ourselves. But it's always the way."

"It seems an ideal place for a camp," I observed in order to change the subject. "You see, no one can track them here, for the bed of the stream doesn't leave impressions, and, in any case, one man could hold the entrance against fifty."

"And what about the country above?" asked Maskey, giving his head a little jerk upwards.

"I fancy it's a jumble of great rocks and stones, and impossible for horses, anyhow—like lots more of these little hills. But it would be good country to hide in if we could only once get away, and there would be no tracks."

"Humph!" snorted Maskey.

It was indeed a place where no one would think of looking for us. No one would think it worth while following up that little stream, and if anyone did happen to ascend that rough ridge they would never know of the presence of the natural bowl or valley unless they happened to stumble right upon it.

One thing I was beginning to find out about Maskey was that, if you wanted to direct his thoughts so as to settle on any line of action, the way to go about it was to indicate it in a casual sort of way, then throw cold water on it. The cranky one would straightway champion that course for the sheer love of contradiction. I resolved to pursue this plan with him in future.

The valley was well wooded with giant trees, but fairly clear of undergrowth. I had never before seen such excellent mia-mias, or such order and cleanliness in any aboriginal encampment.

We were taken to a species of round hut, or mia-mia, near where the stream seemed to issue from an archway in the side of the cliff. There were no sides to the hut, and we could see all that was going on around us. Though I had seen many bands of so-called semi-civilised blacks down in the settled part of Queensland; still, to behold the myall or genuine wild article in his natural state, pursuing his everyday savage life, was to me absorbingly interesting. I almost lost sight of our undoubtedly dangerous position watching them.

One feature that impressed itself most upon me was their intense love of mimicry. If the Australian savage is anything, he is a born mimic, and is always acting. His corrobborees, indeed, are nothing more than primitive plays. At that very moment our guards, some five or six in number, now formed a little group by themselves some half dozen yards or so away to the right, and were amusing themselves by rehearsing the late incidents connected with our capture. The part played by my companion in misfortune seemed to be the favourite *rôle*. One tall, angular savage must have made an actual study of Maskey's facial expression when fighting, for he pursed his lips, shut one eye, drew his mouth to one side, and hit out with his clenched fists from the shoulder in a way that suggested piston-rods. A burst of laughter invariably followed one of these little exhibitions.

I could see my companion furtively watching his unflattering impersonator, and with no little concern I noted that the warlike spirit of old Grandfather Johnnie was fast rising to boiling-over point within him. The veins on his neck and forehead were swelling, and an angry flush was showing under his tan. The blacks had released our hands, but a rope had been left trailing to Maskey's waist, doubtless with an eye to contingencies. His breath came and went quickly. I hastened to say to him:—

"I wouldn't take any notice of that fool. Little things please small minds. He's only a silly savage, anyhow."

That seemed to be the trouble—to think that a savage would dare to mimic him.

"Begosh!" said Maskey.

And then with an amazing agility he sprang from the ground into a crouching position, ran swiftly towards the little group, and before the public entertainer divined his presence, or any of the apprehensive audience could stop him, he had given his tormentor a blow on the side of the head that would have instantly killed any other than an Australian black fellow. He was sent spinning into the only bush within a radius of sixty yards. Of course, it was a thorn-bush, and he dived into it head first, and stuck there.

"Take that!" cried Maskey, putting up his hands in professional style. "And come on, if ye dare."

In a moment the blacks were all around us, and I was afraid we were in for a rough time.

"For goodness' sake, Maskey, what good can that do?" I cried. "That's not going to help us out."

But Maskey paid no heed, and kept sparring at the unhappy actor, who now put one in mind of an ostrich trying to bury its head in an all too inadequate hole. The thorn-bush was such that the discomfort was, doubtless, less intense if one remained in a stationary, if inelegant, position instead of trying to tear oneself clear.

Of course, the unfortunate mimic could not accept the insulted bullock-driver's invitation to "come on," for very good and sufficient reasons. Maskey, however, did not seem inclined to give him any credit for his inability.

"I knowed ye wir a coward!" he cried, flourishing his fists. "Stand up like a man and don't try and get a-hidin' of yourself there."

The situation was such that again I had to laugh. If the blacks had suddenly made up their minds to kill me, I could not have helped it. As it was, there was no mistaking the fact that my laughter scared them. They undoubtedly considered me mad.

I had thought that Maskey's action would have aroused the resentment of the others, but my knowledge of human nature was still immature. The actor, by reason of his airs and graces, had his enemies. He might be able to amuse them, but, doubtless, most of them had been subjected on occasions to his powers of ridicule when not in a position to retaliate. So now that someone—even if he was an enemy—paid him back with interest, and placed him in a ludicrous and humiliating position, they were not going to help get rid of his cup of bitterness. They turned their attention to Maskey instead.

They caught the end of the rope which was tied round Maskey's waist, and by pulling in one direction, then turning sharply inwards, they succeeded in lifting the melancholy one almost off his feet, and spinning him round in a circle like a toy at the end of a string. It was fun—for them, and their laughter showed how they enjoyed it.

As for Maskey, he became inarticulate with indignation, and I had just rushed in to try and prevent what seemed an imminent catastrophe, when the agile bushman managed to grasp the rope and pull it in hand over hand. I saw him grasp a savage by the neck. There was a *click* as the unfortunate fell backwards prior to wriggling on the ground like a decapitated eel. Then he succeeded in catching another in like manner. This time with one mighty push of his long, muscular right arm he sent him cannoning into the others, and that finished the business. Maskey's tormentors went down like so many ninepins, and he stood alone triumphant.

I feared that he might institute further reprisals, and bring about a really serious development.

"You've given them beans, Maskey," I said, soothingly, "and I wouldn't be at all surprised if you've broken that chap's neck. Don't stir them up more than you can help, please."

But Maskey had no words, for the very good and sufficient reason that he had no more breath.

CHAPTER XVII

SPORT WITH THE SAVAGES

I HAD thought the savages would certainly turn and rend us because of the touchy bushman's indiscretion, but in this I was agreeably surprised. Perhaps what helped to stay reprisals on their part was the fact that I had succeeded in getting Maskey to sit down again, in order, as I told him, to get his wind back.

"Maskey," I observed, "I believe you've hurt that actor chap. He looks awfully sick."

"Glad to hear it," said Maskey. "Good thing they can look sick sometimes. Play-actin' folks gen'rally look so mighty pleased with themselves—fancies everyone's admiring 'em—can't ever be thimselves for they ain't got no self. Born apes, I calls 'em."

I wondered what the extent of my companion's experience had been with the fraternity down Sydney or Melbourne way, and watched the now very subdued actor as he picked himself slowly up, and stalked shakily away with the air of one who says grimly to himself, "Aha! my time shall come!"

"Maskey," I said, after a bit. "I'm getting awfully hungry; I wonder if they're going to give us anything to eat?"

"Waal, if they don't intend to starve us I fancies they may give us a choice of snakes, caterpillars, or iguanas."

The odd thing was that Maskey seemed in no way alarmed at the prospect. I suspected he had tackled the fare mentioned before, and I found my surmises were correct. He had lived on these things "Out Back" for weeks at a stretch, like many another bushman, and had been glad to get them.

When later on in the day the blacks brought us an uncooked portion of carpet snake, some yams, a bandicoot, and a bush rat, I admit I was not in a mood to be critical. We at once toasted the articles in question on the glowing charcoal. The little bandicoot was simply delicious, and tasted like sucking-pig, the only drawback being there was only one bandicoot. Roasted snake is not unpalatable, and it is sufficiently nourishing. It is only prejudice that makes the white man shudder at the thought of having to eat it. The moment his prejudices have been overcome he realises that snake is cleanly and wholesome food. I felt rather proud of myself when I had partaken of it. It was something to have been captured by wild blacks, and to have eaten snakes. What wonderful yarns I would be able to tell my old chums when I got back to civilisation again—if ever we did get back.

We both felt better after we had that meal,

only the thought of what they were going to do with us exercised me. It was not likely these savages were going to content themselves with merely keeping us prisoners. Maskey produced his pipe, and doubtless, under the influence of the congenial weed, and by the apparently absent-minded way in which he kept studying the rugged sides of the cliff, he was thinking out some means of escape. I did not interrupt his thoughts, but kept

"Come on, Maskey," I said. "I don't think they mean to hurt us. It will be interesting to see what's at the other end of that tunnel."

He was evidently curious, too, and did not hesitate to plunge waist-deep into the water. We passed into the tunnel, and began to wade laboriously up it. The passage began to contract, and the rush of water was such that it took us all our time to stand up against it.

We plunged waist-deep into the water, and passing into the tunnel began to wade laboriously up it.

speculating on our chances of giving the blacks the slip. The prospects were by no means encouraging.

It might have been about four o'clock in the afternoon when our guard surrounded us, signed to us to accompany them, and made towards the tunnel in the rock from which the goodly sized stream came. Maskey at first paused irresolute.

It became almost dark. Then suddenly the passage took a turn, and we saw daylight at the far end. The black glistening walls of rock narrowed overhead, then suddenly a great split showed a surface with mottled lichens of orange and green sprawling all over it. It was very high—hundreds of feet it seemed to us, but although it was flooded with light we could not see the sky. It did not

appear to be more than a foot or two in width, and the surface of the rock on either side was very rough, with little horizontal ledges running through it. Everywhere on its damp sides there sprawled fantastic vegetable growths. In some places the most beautiful ferns met and created a shade.

"Don't git lookin', Eric. Don't look as if you'd taken any partic'lar notice of it," said my companion, hurriedly. "I've taken it all in—likewise how we can git to it."

Maskey had not lived in the back-blocks the greater part of his life without cultivating the faculty of observation. While I had been gazing up through that crevasse with curiosity pure and simple, the bushman had been noting and mentally measuring what he could see of it with a view to taking advantage of it if he got the chance.

I did as he told me, and kept on. In two or three minutes more we had passed through that great wall of rock, and a long, narrow valley lay before us, the end of which we could not see. The stream here was three or four times the width of what it had been lower down, and across its entire surface it was broken up into innumerable squares by low walls, the water finding its way from one square to another by regular and narrow openings resembling doorways. It looked as if the foundations and dwarf walls of a prospective double row of houses had been begun in the bed of that stream, and then operations had suddenly ceased. In a moment I divined the meaning of it all.

"A black fellow's fishery!" I cried to Maskey. "These walls look as if they had been built by a stonemason."

"Don't insult the niggers," solemnly observed the pessimist; "it 'ud take a stonemason a long time afore he could build a wall like that."

I looked incredulous.

"A stonemason," said Maskey, "would have built a wall that wouldn't stand a shower of rain, far less a flood. This 'un, I'd say, was hundreds of years old. Look at the green stuff on the sides of the stones, and the way they're worn at the gates where the water rushes through."

I looked and marvelled. There were unmistakable signs that the savages had built these weirs and stone chambers generations ago.

"Now we'll have some fish and fun," said Maskey, without the faintest trace of elation on his melancholy countenance. Indeed, he might have been setting out to attend the funeral of his dearest friend, he looked so solemn.

I noticed that the sides of this valley or gorge were even more precipitous and impassable than the lower one.

"You kin take it from me," said Maskey, "that there's no gettin' out of this show by following it up. But I'm thinkin' there's no need to try."

Despite the thought of the anxiety of my uncle and the others in regard to our safety, I confess that the sport we soon engaged in, chasing and catching those fish by means of little landing-nets and spears, made us forget our captivity for the time being.

The water was shut off by a species of sluice gate at the top end, and turned into a side channel. As it drained off from the various maze-like chambers the sport began. There were any amount of large and very lively fishes, and as the water became shallow enough to expose part of a back fin, a hunt with by no means unequal chances was on the boards.

We chased those fish excitedly from one chamber into another. Sometimes we thought we had cornered them, and then they would double on us. Sometimes a black fellow would make so sure of some three or four-pounder that he would fling away his net, and try to grab it with his hands. Then there would be a struggling man and fish, and laughter and yells that might have been heard a mile away. I had tried conclusions with several fish, but they had mostly tripped me up, and succeeded in getting away just when I thought I had them. It was exciting and glorious sport.

As for Maskey, I thought he had gone mad. He became terribly excited, and chased those fish about with that agility which had before astonished me and commanded my admiration. He had uncommonly long legs, and in order to take short cuts, he would jump clean over the low walls until the blacks themselves paused to watch and admire. He shouted belated instructions to everyone, and sometimes appeared to be emulating the fish by the way he floundered about in the shallow water after them. I had never seen any schoolboy lose his head like that usually solemn stockman.

"You seem to be having a good time, Maskey," I remarked on getting alongside him.

"May as well," he said, laconically. "You see we shan't be here to-morrow."

"What!" I exclaimed. "You mean to try and escape by that crevasse?"

"Yes, but don't point," he replied. "We'll tackle it to-night."

(To be continued.)

MODELS & MODEL MAKING

By HENRY GREENLY

Mr. Greenly, who is admittedly one of the greatest experts on model-making in the world, will be pleased to give any assistance he possibly can to Captainites interested in this splendid hobby. So if you are in doubt upon any point, or want any information whatever, write to him for advice, c/o "The Captain office."

HOW TO MAKE A MODEL HAND FORCE PUMP

AMONG the accessories of the model steam engine, one of the most useful appliances is the force pump. In the smaller models such pumps are for the most part operated by hand. A steam-driven pump is a complicated device, and is not to be recommended except for the larger size of model or "small power" plant.

Where the pressures are moderate and the amount of water to be forced comparatively small, the direct-acting hand-pump may be employed. Such a pump is illustrated in the accompanying diagram, Fig. 1. This drawing, which is reproduced to full size, depicts a type of hand-pump which may be made by any amateur, and without a lathe, although this useful appliance would, of course, ensure a better finish and eliminate makeshift methods in the construction. The pump is suitable for pressures up to 20lbs. to 30lbs. per square inch, and at 50 strokes a minute should, if the valves are reasonably tight, deliver 2 cubic inches of water per minute. It should therefore suffice for a model stationary steam plant with an engine cylinder measuring up to $\frac{5}{8}$in. bore by 1in. stroke or for a locomotive with $\frac{1}{2}$in. bore cylinders. At 30lbs. per square inch the pressure of the hand on the knob K will amount to about 2$\frac{1}{2}$lbs. plus the power required to overcome the friction. This is not out of the way, and it is not until a force of 10lbs. is required that a lever hand-pump is really necessary.

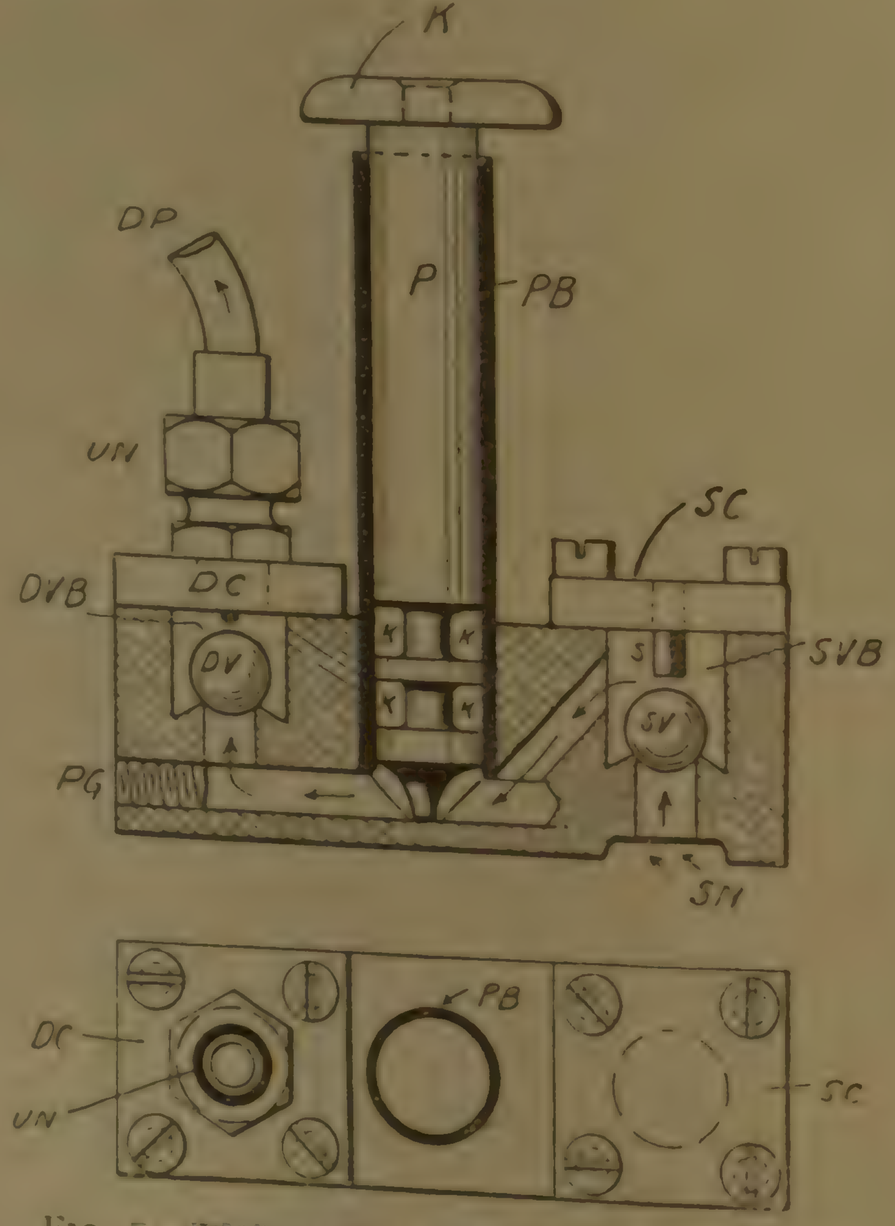


FIG. 1.—Design for a small model hand pump. (*Actual size.*)

DV Delivery valve
SV Suction valve
SVB Suction valve box
SC Suction valve cover
SN Suction
PG Plug
S Step
P Pump plunger
PB Pump barrel
DP Delivery pipe
UN Union pipe
DVB Delivery valve box
DC Delivery valve cover

THE MATERIALS FOR MAKING THE PUMP

The materials required for the pump illustrated are not numerous or expensive. Care should, however, be taken to obtain a good fit between the piece of brass rod used for the plunger P and the pump barrel PB. It does not matter if they fit rather tightly at the outset, as the two parts can be ground to a working fit with bath-brick dust and water. Emery is not recommended, as it remains in the brass and accelerates wear and tear. Pumice powder is very good where the amount of metal to be removed is small.

The block of brass forming the base of the pump and the valve-boxes is a piece of $\frac{5}{8}$in. by $\frac{5}{8}$in. square rod brass, 1$\frac{7}{8}$ins. long. This

should not cost more than 6d. or 7d. The hole for the tube forming the pump barrel should be marked out and drilled with a suitable drill. Although twist drills are admirable tools for iron and steel, they do not work so well in brass. They have a tendency to "grab." This being the case, if a twist drill is used care should be exercised to hold the work firmly so that if there is any tendency of the drill to "grab," and revolve the work, it is resisted. Furthermore, the drill should be run at a good speed. Of course a flat diamond-pointed drill may be used. These drills can be made at home, and the size of the hole-drill can be altered to any odd dimension. A drill of this kind is illustrated in Fig. 2. If such a drill is used for boring the hole for the pump barrel, the angle of the point should be as flat as possible; and to ensure a straight hole, a small diameter drill (say $\frac{1}{8}$in.) may be used first.

FIG. 2.—A flat diamond-pointed drill.

THE VALVE-BOXES AND PASSAGES

The holes forming the suction-valve and delivery-valve boxes should be drilled with a $\frac{3}{8}$ in. drill first. This forms the lower portion, and when the larger $\frac{7}{8}$ in. diameter hole is drilled down, a seating for the ball valve is obtained. To provide a proper seating a special finishing tool is required. If left as formed by the ordinary drill (see Fig. 4) a very poor seating for the ball valves would be the result. Great difficulty would be experienced in getting a watertight valve, and, if obtained, there would be no guarantee of it remaining tight for any length of time. What is known as a knife edge seating will be found to be quite satisfactory. This type of seating is shown in the general arrangement drawing, Fig. 1, and in the detail, Fig. 5. It is well suited to the ball valve.

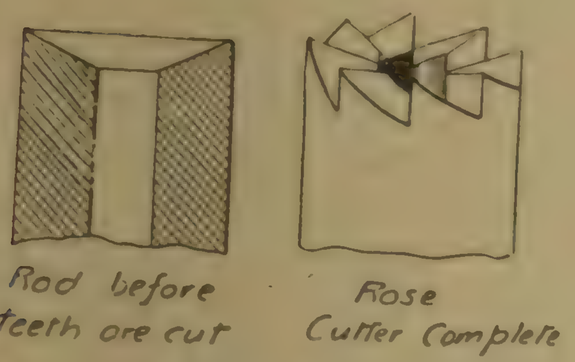


FIG. 3.—Making a rose cutter.

The best type of finishing drill, or "rose cutter," to give it its proper name, is shown in Fig. 3. This is made by drilling down a piece of round "tool" steel with a hole smaller than the valve orifice (which is $\frac{3}{8}$ in.), and recessing the end face in the lathe to the angle of the seating. When this is done the teeth must be formed in the face with a suitable file. The cutter may then be hardened, although if only one job has to be done with it, and the material to be operated on is brass, this is not absolutely essential. This type of cutter, however, is rather difficult to make, and premises the use of a lathe. Another

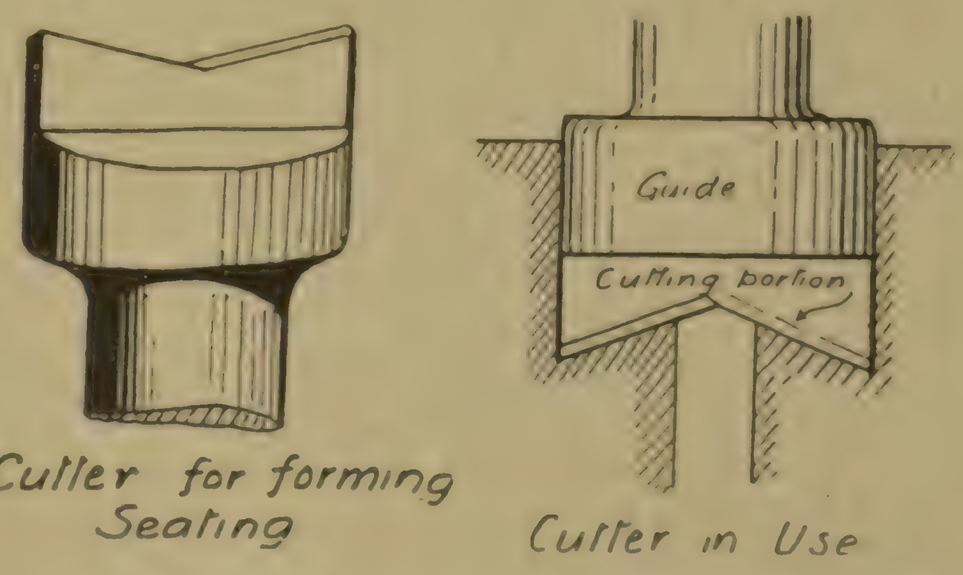


FIG. 6.—Alternative type of cutter for valve seating.

form of cutter is therefore suggested in Fig. 6. It is also made from a piece of round steel rod the same size as the valve-box—*i.e.*, $\frac{3}{8}$ in. in the present case. It is filed flat at the extremity as shown, and then has cutting edges of the correct angle formed on this flat portion. The original round form should be as close as possible to the cutting portion so that it will act as a guide. This is shown in the sketches.

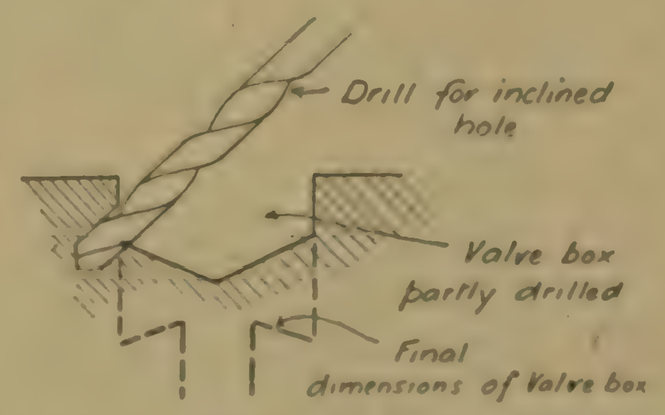


FIG. 7.—Drilling an inclined hole.

Having made the valve-boxes, the passages to the pump barrel may then be drilled. The horizontal hole must be drilled from the outside, and the point of entry for the drill afterwards plugged up with a screwed plug, shown in the general drawing, Fig. 1, at PG. The hole for the suction must connect the pump barrel chamber above the ball, and therefore must be drilled at an angle. To do

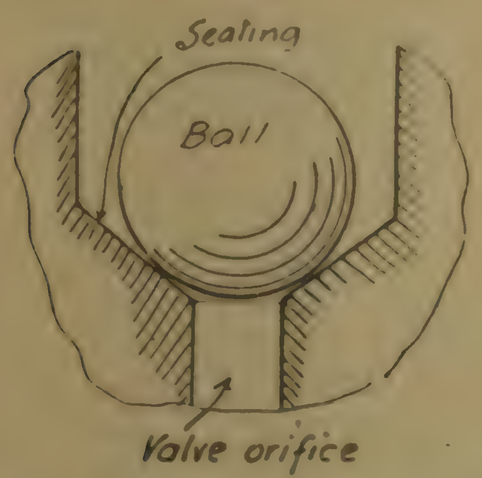


FIG. 4.—Seating for ball valve, as formed by ordinary drills.

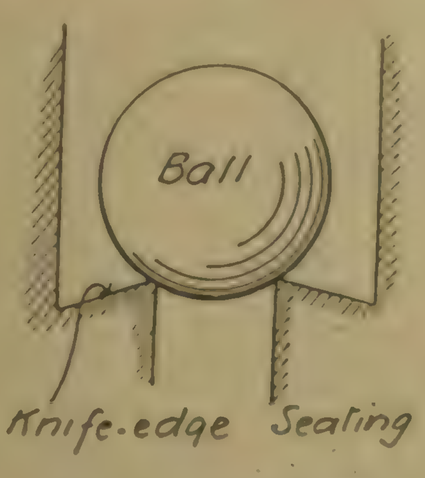


FIG. 5.—An efficient valve and valve seating.

this without difficulty it should be drilled during the process of drilling down the valve-box. When this hole has proceeded, say, about ½in., the inclined passage can be more readily started, as there will be something for the point of the drill to rest against. This is shown in Fig. 7.

THE BALL VALVES

The balls for the valves should be of bronze. These cost only a few pence. The size required is ⅜ in. In addition to the bronze balls, one or two steel balls of the same size should be obtained in addition. These will be found useful in finishing the valve seating, as they resist damage so very much better than the bronze balls. A good way of accomplishing this is to place one of the steel balls on the valve orifice and to give it a sharp blow with a light hammer. In addition, one of the steel balls may be used with pumice powder to grind the valve seating to the correct curvature and finish. In any case, with the knife-edge type of seating, obtaining a good watertight valve is not a difficult matter.

THE VALVE-BOX COVERS

The caps for the valve-boxes are square pieces of brass plate secured by four ⅛ in. screws in each. The screws should be brass, and the caps or covers should be made watertight by jointing with oiled paper. The paper used should be thick and not too hard. Otherwise the screws will not be able to squeeze up the paper and secure a good joint over the whole surface.

LIMITING THE VALVE LIFT

To prevent the suction valve lifting too much, a stop (S) should be soldered to the underside of the cover, as indicated on the general drawing. In the delivery box a piece of wire (a pin cut to the required length will do) should be soldered across the hole in the top of the cap, to prevent the valve rising and blocking up the passage to the delivery pipe. The union UN is a standard male end union such as supplied by all dealers at about a shilling or fifteen pence. It should be screwed and soldered into the valve-box cover.

As the pump is intended to be used as a "drowned" pump and placed in the bottom of the tank from which it takes its supply, a groove is cut in the bottom of the brass block at SN to allow the suction water to get to the valve.

MAKING THE PLUNGER WATERTIGHT

The plunger is packed by having two grooves filed or turned in the bottom portion. Darning cotton is wound in these grooves. The knob at the top is formed from a disc of metal. Such discs are stock articles, and can be obtained from all the leading metal merchants. It should be riveted and soldered to the top of the plunger. The bottom of the plunger should be coned, as indicated, to prevent it being pushed down so low that the packing gets entangled in the passages to the valves. The top of the pump barrel should also be bell-mouthed to facilitate the entry of the already packed plunger.

R. E. Dunnett (Hants).—Sandy water would certainly cause the trouble, although piston valve seizures are often due to other things, like under-lubrication, excessive heat, etc. Good clean rain-water can be strongly recommended. If you have any doubt, strain it through fine gauze, or pass through a filter paper.

The Terror of the Deep

A Splendid Story of a Thrilling Adventure in Portsmouth Harbour

By F. St. MARS

THERE is no stillness like the stillness of those lonely harbours, estuaries, and creeks which lie within sound of the guns of Portsmouth. Though so near to the bustle and hurry of the great town they are practically deserted—desolate, wind-smitten, dreary. No ships come into them, they are without wharves, and know no trade. At high tide they look like vast, island-dotted lakes; at low tide one sees only a desert of mud, the haunt of wild-fowl and sea-gulls.

Gerald Besmer, the journalist, sat in the stern of the steam launch *Thrasher* fishing. Fishing was his favourite pastime in the summer, and whenever he could snatch a holiday he would come down to those harbours, and practically live in the steam launch *Thrasher*, which was the property of a friend. Besmer was quite an expert in the handling of the launch.

"Fish gone to a beanfeast or something," grunted he, letting himself down to the cushioned seat, and shutting his eyes to the hot sun. "Call this fishing, Chub? Wouldn't crab-hunting be more exciting?"

"Chub" Lancing, owner of the launch—a great, ruddy-haired, freckled giant of a man—turned and looked down upon his lean, alert, dark friend.

"It might," he said, slowly, and even as he spoke the expression of his countenance changed. "No, by thunder, it wouldn't—not if you wanted excitement! Look at your line!"

Besmer looked—and gasped. He moved exactly in one bound from cushioned seat to stern. His line, which was neatly coiled by the wheel, was going out at speed. No, that conveys nothing—it was *whistling* out. Besmer, who had seized the line, dropped it with a howl.

"My stars!" he cried. "That would skin you quicker than a knife!"

Between them they carefully made fast the end of the line, and did what they could with cotton-waste to hold and check its swift outrush.

"If we don't," said Besmer, "it'll snap when it comes to the end. What d'you reckon it is? Strayed salmon in a fit?"

"Not it!" retorted the other, scornfully. "Who ever heard of a salmon pouching line like this? It must be a shark. Brace up, man—we're near the end."

They were nearer than they thought—the real end, I mean. Suddenly a jerk came that removed them to the bottom of the launch on their backs; a wild cant, during which they had the pleasure of looking up at the dead-brown water exactly level with the starboard gunwale, then a rushing of seas. They got to their feet hurriedly, with faces that expressed nothing.

"This beats tarpon in a canter!" shouted Chub Lancing. "Look out, old man—we're off again!"

"If we don't hit a post or a mudbank, we'll get somewhere all right perhaps," Besmer returned, coolly. "Lucky we'd no anchor out!"

"Help me lead this line forrard. I don't know what you think you've caught, but it isn't a sardine, and we're booked to upset going this way round."

Great was the difficulty of their task, but it was done in the end, while the launch careered wildly down the harbour towed by goodness knew what monster of the deep, held—almost miraculously it seemed—merely by the thickness of a fishing-line.

"I'll sit here with a knife, in case this whale takes it into his head to pull us under, and you get to the wheel. We can't do much with the engines as yet. 'Twould only break the line if we went astern," Chub Lancing volunteered.

Besmer dashed for the little wheel, he being admittedly skilful in steering launches, while Lancing produced a knife fit to cut up elephants with, which he always carried when fishing.

Meantime the fish, or whatever it was, kept

on towing the launch, and taking a course as straight as a ruler. Never once did it show its mighty self, and when Lancing endeavoured once or twice to haul on the line the only effect was to waken the giant to a greater pace.

"At this rate," quoth that individual, "we shall reach France to-day. He knows where he's going all right."

"Yes. I wish *we* did." Besmer looked back up the main channel and grunted.

It was seven miles down that harbour, even if you kept straight to the main channel, and did not wait to play about among the side-channels and the islands. At the end, the seaward end, just before the harbour merged into the sea, was a wide, lake-like expanse where three harbours met.

About the time they reached the lake-like juncture of the harbours Besmer woke up to the gravity of the situation.

"Better cut!" he shouted. "If he keeps on he'll run us out through the channel, and over we go!"

Seeing that this channel was narrow, deep, and much like a rapid, Besmer spoke no exaggerated fact. But Lancing did not cut the line. He gave a yell instead.

"Look out, man alive! He's altered his mind!"

He had. The fish evidently thought he would not go out to sea after all, and the line came round to port with a suddenness that canted the launch dangerously. For a moment, as the water came in, things looked bad, but Besmer—the spokes fairly flew under his hand—righted her with fine skill. This time the *Thrasher* was headed straight for the loneliest harbour of all, a sheet of water surrounded by trees among which a few houses far apart had lost themselves.

"Can't we do anything?" Besmer called. "We can cut loose."

The journalist shook his head.

"Not for toffee. Just think what a fish he must be! We *must* get at the beggar some way! Look out! Straight for Blackthorn."

The last words had risen to a shout. The fish was heading straight for a sombre and lugubrious island called Blackthorn Island, a place with one country house and one keeper's cottage on it. There was an old tumbledown green and slimy wharf there which was never used, the inhabitants being able to drive to the mainland along a shingly road at low tide. At high tide they were in a state of "splendid isolation."

Next instant Lancing grabbed the little 220 Winchester rifle which they generally took with them when fishing in order to take pot-shots at the sea-fowl by the way. Came a swirl and a boiling of the water ahead, a burst of spray, and then—nothing. The monster had come nearly to the surface, it seemed, and sounded again.

Lancing put down the rifle and shook his head.

"Knowing old bird," he called back over his shoulder. "Didn't even so much as show a fin."

Consternation, however, overcame them in the next few minutes, and they lost their words. At not more than twelve knots an hour the monster headed straight for the old wharf; then, just when it seemed that it meant to commit suicide by dashing its head against the piles, it swerved with lightning adroitness, slowed, and stopped. The result was startling, and nothing but the amazing quickness of Besmer prevented the launch from going to pieces on the wharf-head. As it was he swerved with a suddenness that slung Lancing into the engines, and almost capsized the *Thrasher*. She slid on, and stopped also.

Lancing picked his great limbs out of the machinery, and peered over the side at the line going straight down into the black depths like a stretched wire.

"Great Scott!" he shouted. "We're over it!"

"Over it?"

"Yes, *precisely* over it, and"—he took hold of the line and pulled; it came up in his hand—"look out, he's coming up!"

Lancing was noted for one or two things, but not for quickness. Yet he did not so much seem to move towards as to *be at* the engines, and there followed the vibrating rumble of the same getting to work. The screw thrashed; the *Thrasher* shook with the power that had been suddenly turned loose in her.

"Astern!" he gasped; "for your only life!" Then he sat down with great force.

There was a terrific bump and a heave. For a moment it seemed as if the launch was going to be lifted bodily to the sky. She heeled dangerously, and then came down with a thunderous splash that nearly shook her engines out. Her occupants shifted to the bottom of the launch with speed and force, expecting to see huge jaws momentarily open over the gunwale. No jaws came, however, and, peering over the side, they saw that the line was now pointing afar off, but not pulling.

They still continued to go astern, Lancing,

with the line in one hand and the rifle in the other, determined not to let a second attack be driven home.

"The old hooker won't stand acrobatics like this," he grumbled. "Line's coming in. Look out! Starboard your helm!"

Besmer had only just time to cant the *Thrasher* on a quick swerve when the surface of the water boiled, and some thing, some monster they could not see, hurled itself, amidst a smother of spray, straight at the launch, passing so close to the bows that the "wash" of its progress slopped over Lancing, and had he known as much about the sea as he did about big game, it was this same hissing "wash" that would have given him the key to the whole situation. The sharp "crack!" of the little rifle sounded three times above the rush of waters, and the thing dived again.

"Thanks," quoth he, as the line ran out and pulled the bows of the launch down to water-level. "I'm not tickled to taking a bath just now with that calamity manœuvring without a keeper. Here goes." And he cut the line.

"That," said Besmer, with a sigh, "is the end of our giant fish, and nobody will believe us. What a pity. Must have weighed a thousand pounds. Wonder what it was?"

"Hold on!" shouted his friend. "This is *not* the end, worse luck!"

The water boiled beneath them, and something scraped the bottom of the launch. Then came again silence.

"Here, I don't like this. Let's go ashore for a bit and see the place. Mysterious people live there, I'm told. Hold no converse with the shore since they came about three months back. Perhaps this gallivanting monstrosity will have cleared by then."

Accordingly they made fast to the rotting piles, and scrambled ashore, where they fell among trees and brushwood. No further demonstration was made by the fish-thing, so they moved inland. The brushwood was thick, the day was hot, and they were just beginning

The monster hurled itself straight at the launch, amidst a smother of spray.

to wonder whether the labour entailed in the exploration was worth the trouble when there came a swift, sinister pattering on the dead leaves. There was no time for warning. Scarce was there time to exclaim. Without a sound other than the pattering, a lean, rough, red beast shot out of the cover and charged open-jawed.

So swift, so sinister, so utterly ferocious was that rush that no one could have had any doubt as to its intended end. Its intended end was Lancing's throat, since he happened to be leading. Luckily, Lancing was, though slow, a man of action. Up flew the dainty little rifle, there was a stab of flame, a quick, vicious little report, and the dog, doubling up actually in mid-spring, fell kicking and snapping in a heap. A second report followed from the repeater, and the silence of the harbours closed in again. The dog was quite dead.

"My word!" quoth Besmer. "We're in for a cheerful day! Lucky you brought the rifle. What a brute! People oughtn't to be allowed to keep beasts like that loose."

"Ought to be pole-axed," agreed Lancing, "but we'd better slide launchwards. Trespassing and shooting dogs may lead to cold and unfriendly weather. Come on."

They had no more than turned in their tracks to go than a most extraordinary sound fell upon the still, hot air. It was almost exactly like the clanging to of some great iron door, and it came from the disused wharf. Now there was nothing at all to account for that sound, either on the launch or out of it, along the wooded shore, or among the rotting piles of the wharf, and it came as a shock to the two men who heard it. There was something uncanny and mysterious about it.

"I don't half like that noise," muttered Lancing. "I've heard that the people renting the house and island are strange, and what with that beast and the fish, I'll feel happier elsewhere. Come on!"

They broke from the brushwood, which had won back its ground right up to the wharf, somewhat abruptly, and ran to the launch. Then they stood quite, quite still on the wharf-edge, staring blankly at the *Thrasher*. She was lifted slightly out of the water, and canted a little on one side—that was the one terror. The other terror lay in the fact that her inside was in the most amazing state of confusion; oil-cans, coal, fishing-lines, rifle-cover, coats, ropes, boat-hook, fish-basket, everything, in fact, that was movable in her being strewn about as if ten monkeys had been loose on her for a day. This was not as they had left her, for Lancing took particular pride in the neatness of his "rig." It was evident to them that not only had something alive been aboard her, but also that something was at that moment alive outside of her, beneath her, holding her up. Nevertheless, whatever precise kind of monster it was, it took good care not to show itself.

Lancing did not wait. He saw that the vicinity of that island, on dry land or sea, was becoming too dangerous; the position was getting serious, in fact. He threw up his rifle, and, aiming beneath the *Thrasher*, fired three shots in quick succession. The rifle was only a rook rifle, taking the Winchester special long 22-calibre cartridge, and probably the water turned, or stopped, the bullets—as it will more surely than a steel plate—but it had one effect. There was a swirl, a mighty bubbling, and the *Thrasher* settled again on an even keel with a splash. They waited a minute or two—Lancing's rifle still up—for anything else to happen, but there was only the lapping of the water and the cries of sea-gulls.

"Now I'm off," cried he, taking a flying leap into the launch. "I've had enough."

Besmer followed him like his shadow, and, pushing off, flung himself to the wheel as Lancing set the engines furiously to work. Lancing stood by the engine, rifle in hand, ready to fire at anything that showed, and Besmer fell back on the boat-hook as a likely weapon. Quickly Lancing had the launch going at full speed, and it was as well.

They were not a hundred yards from that awful wharf when the surface of the water about twenty yards behind began to bubble.

"Look out!" shouted Besmer. "Here it comes."

There was a swirl and a seething of foam, then the swirl kept on. The thing was following them, not chasing exactly, but simply following as a single wolf, or a vulture, will follow a wounded beast; and the two men found no joy at all in sitting in that launch and watching the silent, unswerving course of that "wash" made by one knew not what horror, keeping always exactly so far astern.

Lancing knew it was useless to fire, for the water would stop or turn the bullet. He also would rather have the beast there, where they knew what it was up to, than playing the fool under the launch, where they did not. Nevertheless, the horror of that flight was such as those two will not forget to-morrow or the day after. Of course, they were in a big launch, and all that; and no sea creature had ever

yet been known to tackle so large a craft in English waters, but there was still the possibility that this monster might dare what had never been attempted before.

For perhaps two miles the nightmare continued, the launch tearing along in a little cloud of her own spray ; Lancing rigid and pale by the engines, Besmer like a statue at the wheel, the sweat pouring down his face, and always behind, as if towed, that dread, unswerving wash. Then, quite suddenly, it turned and went straight out to sea, till the ripple died and was lost in the distance, and the *Thrasher* ran home as fast as her propeller would take her.

That night, as Besmer sat at supper with his friend, the country paper-boy called with the evening paper of those parts. Besmer folded the paper, and propped it up against a jug in front of him, and, reading between mouthfuls, he started on his meal. Next moment he put down his fork and seized the paper.

" Just listen to this, Chub," he cried, and started to read aloud. " ' The alarming discovery was made this morning that a number of submarine mines, forming the most important portion of the secret mine-field which guards the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour, are missing.' " Besmer put down the paper, and stared across the table. " How about our monster fish ? " he asked.

" Don't see what our monster fish can have to do with mines in the harbour, anyhow," Lancing replied. " D'you think he's eaten 'em ? "

" Don't you ? " Besmer returned. " Well, listen to this. This is further down. ' A steam-tug entering the harbour at about 2 a.m. reports having sighted what appeared in the darkness to be a giant fish, which uttered an uncanny hissing sound at the approach of the vessel. This fish, the captain of the tug asserts, cannot have been less than 20ft. in length, and had eyes of a phosphorescent green, which shone like the eyes of a cat. Although, since the spot where it was sighted is believed to lie directly over the mine-field, the appearance of such a monster of the deep seems a strange coincidence, it is difficult to believe that it could have any connection with the missing mines. To become entangled with the anchorage of one mine might be possible ; but it is thought quite impossible that it could have cast several adrift, and even if it had it is well-nigh incredible that the mines should not have been sighted floating away on the surface. When last seen the monster was heading out to sea on an easterly course. We may add that we have no reason to doubt the positive assertion of the captain of the tug and his crew, who are, and have been for many years, employed by the Admiralty.' "

" Ho-ho ! What ? " cried Lancing. " Ha-hum ! We—*we*, mark you, are on the eve of a great discovery. *We* are going to be famous, by Jove ! Stand aside, all you people." He rose, and struck an attitude. " We, the saviours of the nation's mine-field. We the discoverers of the hidden danger. We, the heroes of the deep. We, the——"

" I *don't* think ! " cut in the journalist. " You put yourself out on the window-sill to cool, old man. This isn't a lion, you know."

" Why ? Haven't I nearly shot the thing, and didn't we nearly catch it, and didn't we see it ? "

" No, we didn't," Besmer corrected. " That's just it. We just escaped seeing it. But it's the same beast right enough, unless——"

" Unless what ? "

" Unless there's a shoal of them."

" Glory ! But what can they have to do with the mines anyway ? "

Besmer shrugged his shoulders.

" There are many stranger things in the sea than you or I have dreamt of in our philosophy."

Next morning at breakfast they were electrified. The morning paper told them that a " cutter " from one of the battleships at Spithead had been capsized by the unknown monster rising beneath it, and the sailors only with difficulty saved ; and that a man who had gone out to fish with a hand-line in a boat from Hayling Island was believed to have been killed by the creature, as the boat had been found floating bottom upwards. Further the papers informed them that public warnings had been issued to fishers and bathers all along the central south coast, and—this was where Lancing banged down his fist—a Government reward of £50 was offered for the capture of the monster dead or alive. Possibly the most peculiar part of it all was that nobody save the captain and crew of the tug had actually seen the leviathan, and then only as a moving mass of something alive through the dark.

" Now the thing is," asserted Lancing, when they had read all there was to read, " are we going to try for that fifty, or are we not ? "

" How ? "

" Why, take my two big-game rifles and a revolver each, and someone to help with the launch ; and—let's see, yes, one or two of those M'sai spears I brought back from Africa, in

case he tries on the capsizing from beneath dodge again. The blade's over a foot long on those spears, and as sharp as any razor. Reckon he won't do much pushing upwards against *them*. We can run down and hang about till we see him, and look round the old piles and the wharf."

"I'm game," Besmer answered.

It was, however, the day following before the lake-like expanse which marked the junction of all the harbours beheld once more the busy, nosing, fuming *Thrasher*. Something, as Lancing explained laconically, "had gone wrong with her innerds" in the meantime, and she took a day's tinkering to remedy the trouble.

Any peaceful picnic party meeting the *Thrasher* coming suddenly round a headland would have given one look only and—stampeded. She resembled more nearly a pirate craft, crewed with ruffians armed as for war, than a pleasure and fishing boat. Lancing sat in the bows, binoculars in hand, a Mauser sporting magazine-rifle across his knees, and revolver and hunting-knife in belt; Besmer at the wheel boasted the same armament, though he, being a journalist, looked less formidable than the "big game man"; whilst, juggling with bared arms among the plunging machinery, was a man in a blue jersey and a great black beard, who had been an engineer on some local tug, but was now a fisherman.

For a long time they cruised in silence, seeing nothing.

"Oh, hang this!" cried Besmer at last. "Our luck's out for a walk. Let's try the old wharf."

Lancing shrugged his shoulders as Besmer put the wheel down. His eyes were tired from looking through binoculars at waves which always looked like turning into the swirl of some great fin, and never did quite.

"You don't suppose he lives there, do you?" he asked. "Besides, I don't relish landing on the island. People seem to me a bit mad in the house there."

But Besmer only laughed, and headed the *Thrasher* for the lonely, frowning, treed face of the island. Thence for a quarter of an hour they navigated in silence.

The ruined wharf, with its tottering, green-slimed posts, its drunken sheds, and the black water oozing and gurgling among the piles, was certainly a place where one could have fears which one would laugh at away from it. No terrible thing, however, rose to meet them—then. They saw nothing of any interest till, on a sudden, Besmer gave a cough, and pointed to an iron ring by the rotting landing-stage. It had a new rope attached.

"Visitors," quoth he.

"Evidently," admitted Lancing.

"In the night," continued he.

"As how?" asked the other.

"End of lantern candle dropped there; matches dropped further up; green broken

The ferocious animals were upon them when Besmer fired—

glass from lantern over there; cigarette-ends all over the map, and—hullo! Look, here's an empty oil-can thrown away, and—and discharged revolver cartridges, or automatic pistol cartridges."

"Then someone's been before us. P'r'aps our fish-thing ate 'em. Shouldn't wonder. But what were they doing there at night, anyway? Let's land. Seems to be an awful lot of footmarks," Lancing asserted.

So there were. As they made fast and climbed up on to the wharf they found the whole place muddy with footmarks, and in the sloppy approach to the wharf the mud was trampled and pitted. Moreover, a regular pathway had been made, and much used, through the tangle of brushwood growing right up to the wharf-edge, as you will remember. Nor was

that all, for examination of the mud showed strange things. There were, for instance, mixed with the footprints of men, those of more than one dog, and a great scarred line as if something heavy had been dragged up from a boat at the wharf. This latter did not lead far, however. It ran only to a half-ruined and tumbledown row of sheds nearly smothered in brushwood by the wharf itself, used at one time, no doubt, as a storehouse.

"Let's go and look in," said the journalist, journalistically. "This is beginning to look mighty rum."

The other nodded.

"Stand by the launch," he called to the fisherman, "in case we have to retreat."

The man nodded, and stood watching them move forward. Suddenly his eyebrows went up, and his mouth opened. Then next instant it shut like a trap, and his beard stuck out.

"Ahoy there!" he roared, in a bull-like thunder, quite unexpected from one with so soft a voice. "Dog bearin' down, full speed a'ead on port quarter. Turn your guns loose. 'E'll ram yer."

The two heard the rumble, and, spinning like tops, had just time to behold a long, red shape gliding towards them at great speed.

"What, another dog?" they gasped, in chorus, and fired together on the last word.

The dog turned a complete somersault and lay still, the high-velocity bullets having nearly cut him in two. He was quite dead. But they had no time to learn this fact then. Came a snarl, a savage growl, and out of the bushes shot two more great, lean, red brutes. They were dogs — like wolves for ferocity.

Besmer, who was a magnificent shot, fired last, and his dog went straight up in the air to fall in a heap, and Lancing and the fisherman, firing together at the other, dropped him just as he was on the point of making his final spring.

Besmer said nothing, but kept a wary eye on the undergrowth.

"There's more in this than meets the eye," ejaculated Lancing. "Much more. Do we go on, or——"

"We go on," replied the journalist, steadfastly. "I'll be hanged if I turn back now We're on the brink of a plot."

"Maybe we're on the brink of death," his friend rejoined. "However, forward it is."

They advanced to the sheds, wading knee-deep in young bushes as they did so, and reached the door of the first shed—always following the strangely deep grooves in the ground that had been cut by hauling something of great weight. They were even about to force their way in, when a voice shouted, only forty yards away in the trees:—

and just in time dropped his brute with a magnificent shot.

"Hi, you poachers, I'll teach you!"

Besmer was half in the shed, half out, and as he caught the words, uttered in a slightly foreign accent, he looked up hastily. Instantly he uttered a half-choked exclamation, and leapt right into the shed. Lancing did not wait to leap. He had seen all he wanted to. He fell flat among the bushes, and wriggled. They had looked straight at the barrels of a double-barrelled gun, and even as they vanished a charge of No. 5 shot came ripping and tearing through the hot sunshine, and a thunderous report filled the air.

After that was a dead silence. Besmer, inside the ruined shed, dared not come out. Lancing, lying flat among the bushes, dared not break cover. Things got hung up, as it were, and the position was decidedly strained.

Besmer looked casually round in the semi-darkness of his temporary shelter among the rifts of sunlight, and suddenly drew a deep breath.

"Great Scott!" he muttered, and then again, "Great Scott!"

He stood for a moment, then turned and did a strange and apparently silly thing. He could just see, among the cover under the trees, a gaitered leg beneath the raised gun-barrels, and lifting his rifle he aimed carefully. This was foolish, because, after all said and done, they had no right there. They were trespassing, and had, it appeared, been mistaken for poachers. Therefore to return the fire was courting imprisonment.

The sharp, heavy smack of the powerful Mauser shattered the stillness all up. Followed a violent agitation among the branches, and the clamour of the second barrel of that gun going off as it fell. There was also a yell of pain from the spot.

Then did Besmer run. He broke cover, and shouting a wild "Come on!" to his friend, dashed crashing through the low bushes to the launch as hard as he could sprint. He could hear Lancing pounding behind him, but no shot came from the wood. Instead there came, in as quick succession as a Martini rifle can be loaded and fired, three shots, followed by a great bellowing.

"That's our fisherman!" gasped Besmer over his shoulder, without looking round.

"You idiot, you've gone and done it!" Lancing snorted. "Whatever made you fire?"

Besmer did not wait to reply. The sight of the fisherman dancing about the launch like a cat on hot bricks gave him no time for speech, but——

"It's it!" Lancing burst out in his ear. "It's the monster."

"Case of the devil and the deep sea," Besmer replied, taking a flying leap as he came to the wharf-side, and landing beside the fuming fisherman with a crash. "What's up? What did you fire at, man?"

"It's the thing," he answered, in his quick, soft voice. "Come in from sea, it did, at the speed o' knots, and when it seed th' launch it made straight for 'er. I stopped it, though, an' it went under with a whirl fit for a sinking liner. What's the next move?"

"The next move," replied Lancing, "is to get away quick. Why, what's the matter with the launch *now*?"

The launch had slowly and quietly lifted—lifted till she heeled dangerously, and those in her flew to the other side in a wild endeavour to right her. But Besmer did more than that. He had the presence of mind to remember the native spears, and, seizing one, leant over the gunwale, and hurled it down with all his strength into the swirling water beneath him. He could not see anything of the huge creature that was lifting them bodily, but he guessed pretty well where to strike. And the spear jarred throughout its length, grated, and sprang back in his hand. At the same moment he remembers that he saw trailing on the surface the cut end of his fishing-line.

Then it was that Besmer gave a great shout, and grabbed his rifle; but before he could fire downwards the monster had sunk again, almost as if it knew, and the launch regained her equilibrium with a loud splash.

"Steel!" he yelled. "It's steel, or at least some metal. Look at the spear, all blunted and turned. It's some kind of submarine, and no fish at all. And I saw one of the missing submarine mines in that shed yonder, too. That's why I fired. It's a plot."

If there had been any time to express surprise his hearers would have expressed it, but there was none. They became aware almost instantly of a mighty bubbling and gurgling on the surface of the water, and up, sure enough, above the surface, her beautifully smooth, curved hull glistening all wet in the sunshine, rose a small submarine. She swerved, she turned, and, her pointed nose aimed straight at the launch, hurled herself forward along the surface, thus showing that she must have been fitted with a "cap" far stronger than that of any British submarine, even of the "D" class.

What followed was rapid and fiery. Also it

was muddled. The fisherman juggled amazingly with the engines; Besmer became a spinning fiend at the wheel; Lancing seemed to stream forth reports, flame, and bullets, and the launch doubled about like a mouse in a roomful of cats. As for the submarine, she was always there, charging fearfully. There was not the slightest doubt about her intentions. She meant murder as plainly as if she had said so, and this proved she could not be British.

The end came rather unexpectedly, though. Without any warning at all there was an awful crash, and the crew of the *Thrasher* sat down backwards, and the *Thrasher's* nose climbed straight up in the air. Then Besmer, peering over the side, nearly choked. They had struck on yet another of the missing submarine mines, which must have been hidden at this place, moored just below the surface. The shock had cast it adrift from its moorings, and there being nothing further to hold it down, it bobbed up alongside like some huge cork.

There was scarce time, however, to realise these amazing things, when Lancing roared out:—

"She's sinking. Run her ashore, lads, for your lives."

Besmer looked down and found that he was sitting in an inch of water, and there was more coming in at every second. The *Thrasher* had practically smashed her nose in on the mine. So they ran her ashore; cramming on all speed with the water slopping about their ankles, and the submarine furiously churning in their wake. There was no time to get alongside properly. Seconds were lives then. They just piled her up on the steps of the landing, and, taking their rifles and spears, jumped for it.

Lancing was the first at the top of the steps, and he came down again quicker than he went up, while two rifle bullets went singing past overhead.

"Great Scott!" he gasped. "They're firing from the bushes. The infernal murderous gang. What's to be done?"

Besmer looked round at the submarine now right on top of the water, evidently intent on their undoing.

"We can't stop here," said he. "They'll open fire from that thing as soon as they get the lid off. We must run for it to cover."

So they ran for it—a matter of perhaps a hundred yards—to the nearest bushes, while report after report rang out from the trees, and the bullets "zipped" and sang all round them. They all crashed into the undergrowth unhurt, but that was only the beginning of that flight through the woods.

"Keep going," Lancing panted. "It's our only chance."

Crashing, tripping, gasping, panting, and sweating they blundered on through the dense shades under the trees, while men shouted in a foreign tongue all about them, and branches cracked and snapped heavily in their wake. Never was there such a fearful game of blind-man's-buff. Once a man in blue crashed out right in front of them. He threw up his rifle on the instant, but that shot was never fired. Besmer, who was leading, lunged forward savagely with one of the spears, and the man dropped in a heap, an amazed look overspreading his face. Once, too, came swift crashings behind them, and the fisherman, stopping and spinning round suddenly, slashed upwards with his seaman's knife and neatly dropped a man in pursuit who was just about to club him with his rifle. Once, also, they all three stopped to face a sudden quick pattering that burst on their ears, and two of the red dogs with which the gang seemed to have surrounded themselves leapt straight out of the shadows clean at their throats. They received those animals on the points of their spears, breaking the hafts, but breaking also the dogs' lives.

At last they came to a path and doubled up it at about the fiercest pace they had ever put up in all their lives, till gradually the shoutings died, and the crashings in the wood ceased, and they came to the far end of the island—the landward end. Here they skulked in the bushes till the sun and the tide went down together. Then they crossed at the double to the mainland, and never were three men so heartily thankful to get there before.

"This," said Besmer, "is a matter for my paper first, and the police next." And to the police, after dispatching a long wire, they hurried, and told their story.

Next day an attack in force was made upon that island, in which the navy co-operated from the sea. They found the submarine mines, all but the smallest one, which for some reason was in the wharf shed, moored in shallow water just below the surface; they found the dead dogs, and two live ones found them, and died very quickly indeed; but never a living man did they find in the house or on the island. They must have departed in the submarine, those men, taking their wounded with them. Of course, there was not the slightest doubt that the gang were spies sent by some foreign power to weaken, if possible, with the aid of

their wonderful little submarine, the defences of our important naval harbour of Portsmouth.

The submarine was never seen again, but that night a fishing smack far out to sea reported having her trawl-nets run into and carried clean away by some unknown gigantic fish, and it is thought that not only was this the fugitive submarine, but that the nets, becoming entangled in her propellers, her crew must have perished miserably, prisoners within her helpless hull on the bed of the ocean.

CURIOUS KOREA

In most countries fashion is a capricious dame, but in Korea they have a very good reason for wearing white grass-cloth robes. Their mourning colour, as in China, is white, and mourning lasts three years. A long time ago three emperors died in one year, and there had to be separate mourning for all of them. This meant nine years of it at a stretch; so the more cheerful among the populace—and they chanced to be in a large majority—decided that if they wore mourning always it would be both expedient and patriotic.

The many shrouded figures, and the conical top-hats that the men wear make a weird effect, and the visitor to Seoul (the Korean capital, which even the ordinary globe-trotter visits nowadays) has plenty of opportunity to moralise, seeing these modes of centuries ago backgrounded by telegraph poles and wide, well-drained roads, and all the modern appliances that make Seoul one of the best tended cities in the Far East. The women, with green silk coats covering their heads, go swiftly and silently by, jealously guarded.

There are lots of queer things about Korea. The national game consists in fighting with brickbats, which regular opposing teams volley off at each other in a selected battle-ground outside the city. The marvel is that so few deaths and serious injuries occur; but that is due to the dexterity of the "players" in dodging rather than to any lack of earnestness on their part in pursuing their "game." The language is pigeon-holed off into seven different departments, according to the age, sex, and social status of the person addressed. A young married man, for instance, is spoken to in sentences quite differently constructed from those in which one would speak to a widower; inferiors are differently addressed from superiors; and in speaking to any member of the Court the speaker must be very careful, and be more than something of a linguist.

A street in Korea.

In family affairs daughters are not counted at all. If you ask a man how many children he has he only mentions his sons. Up till the age of seven, girls have names of their own; but after that they are only known as the daughter, sister, or wife of Mr. So-and-so.

Until the Japanese took over affairs the finances of Korea were truly wondrous. The cash, of which 3,600 go to the Japanese yen (2s.), were the only coins used in practice, though there was a silver unit—the Mexican dollar, or yen, or peso, as it is used throughout the Far East. After the war Japan openly broke her obligations, forcing five out of eight of the Korean cabinet to make their country over to the harsh rule of the Japanese "Resident," Marquis Ito, and visiting with cruel severity upon the poor country the punishment for his assassination.

Now they are frankly exploiting the Koreans, confiscating their land and shaming them before the eyes of Europe. Shaming Europe, too, because the Powers should have listened to the piteous appeal of the emperor, when, six years ago, he smuggled out a message to them repudiating the illegal and cowardly sale of his country, to which Japanese bayonets had coerced his ministers. In that sad time more than one Korean of spirit and patriotism took his own life that he might not see his country's dishonour.

LEOPOLD SPERO.

WHERE SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAMS FAIL

By ALAN R HAIG BROWN

IN like manner as the boy is father to the man, th school representative at football is father to the Corinthian and the Blue. We are ever wont to witness in the ranks of our amateur teams a too pronounced individuality, and the same fault is evident in nearly all public school teams. With the former players this has its reason, with the latter not so. Men who can only get together some half a dozen times in the season cannot expect to possess the precision of a professional side, but public school boys are always playing side by side from one end of the season to the other.

CHOOSING THE ELEVEN

You, my good captain, who rule the winter games at your school, have no light task before you. From some hundreds of fellows, of whom perhaps thirty are eligible, you must choose eleven to lead your *alma mater* on to fame or infamy. And, believe me, the quickness of your choosing is almost more important than your actual choice.

In the building up of a serviceable team, much chopping and changing may at first be necessary; but have done with it *quickly*; get it over as though it were some urgent and unpleasant operation.

Combination is the life-blood of Association football; the playing of the identical team together match after match is the only way to form its corpuscles. By the end of a month the regular players — and their understudies — should be definitely fixed upon; then fit them together, goal-keeper and backs, halves and forwards, like the component parts of some delicate machinery; strengthen their connection with the bonds of sympathy and good-fellowship, and your team will go till the end of the season like clockwork.

BEWARE OF STALENESS

Be as chary of the "too much" as you are of the "too little." Two matches a week an eleven can stand, with no suspicion of staleness, but they don't want club games as well on the "off-days." In the early weeks before the fixture-card opens, take your surfeit of games; they will rub off the rust of summer, and will show the value of the material to hand; but when the matches start—and let these be often and regular—be content with "run-abouts," "shoot-abouts," and "punt-abouts."

These three last things are very, very valuable: each player herein is his own master, can practise his weak points, can correct his faults without feeling all the time—should he be an aspirant to first eleven honours—that the eye of the selection committee is upon him.

But schoolboys fail in other ways than in lack of combination or in staleness; they fail, for instance, like many better men, in front of goal. *Shoot hard and often* must be the motto; don't wait for "sitters," but take shots on the run whenever and wherever you can put them in, and the *wetter the ball the oftener you must shoot.* And don't be too unselfish before the posts. Unselfishness at this point so often means that you would sooner see another fellow make a fool of himself than do so yourself.

Learn to make your play fit all circumstances; be ever ready at a moment's notice to play a close or an open game; schoolboys get so used to playing at home that often on a strange ground they fall away to nothing.

One frequent cause of disaster to a school team is a weak spot, the remedy for which is not easy to find. If it be a forward, a half must go up and help him; if it be a back the half must always be ready to fall back; if it be a half, a wing forward must watch over him in front and his back behind; if it be a *goal-keeper*, he must be turned out of the team and someone else *taught* to succeed him.

THE VALUE OF HEADING

Boys practise every other branch of the game but heading; why so? The one extremity of the body is as useful as the other. Watch a professional team. They juggle with the ball in mid-air, pass it from one to another, and, in fine, probably score more goals off their hair than off their boot leather. All these conjuring tricks can be learnt if the muscles of the neck are trained when the body is young—suppleness is very often the outcome of practice alone, and even the left hand may be trained in youth to be as useful as the right—at any rate, the left foot can.

HOW TO TAKE A CORNER KICK

Talking of professionals reminds me to what good use they always put the corner kicks. How often do we see them wasted in amateur matches! These concessions, which should always be taken by wing forwards, ought, in my opinion, to be negotiated in the same way as a centre. Don't run straight at the ball—run to it almost at right angles and swing the foot round as you kick. Thus will the ball swing round right on to the heads of your waiting forwards; and then comes in that use of the head of which we have just been speaking.

One last word to the wing and other forwards: "Get forrard" as soon as you have the ball. It was once the proud boast of amateurs that they never ran round in circles. Now we are changing that by a too assiduous attention to the professional game—*verb. sap.*

The Finest Tale of School Life ever written.

BLACK EVANS

By R. S. Warren Bell.

Author of "Tales of Greyhouse," "J. O. Jones," etc.

While the seniors of the two schools are discussing football arrangements, Evans comes into verbal collision with Norman and gets the worst of it. His uncouthness, however, is covered by the peace-loving attitude of—

The Previous Chapters.

Fewclass Evans ("Black Evans") is the son of a Welsh clergyman, a wild, lawless, yet crafty youth of nearly seventeen, renowned for his strength and his excellence at Rugby football, and is a member of Christ's College, Abbotsleigh, a school in the Midlands founded by a rich lady for the education of clergymen's sons. On the first day of the Christmas term he is caught in a tobacconist's shop by—

The Rev. E. H. Talbot, M.A., the new head master of Christ's College. Mr. Talbot was formerly head master of a private school at Pageways, now closed, and he has brought with him forty scholars from Pageways, chief of whom is—

Norman, a fine scholar and all-round athlete. Christ's is a Rugby school, while Pageways played "Soccer," and Evans does not exactly earn the love of the "Pagans" (as the boys from Pageways are promptly nicknamed) by expressing his contempt for the latter game.

Coleбrook, head prefect of Christ's, who, wishing to initiate the Pagans into the mysteries of Rugby football, picks up sides for a game. The bewilderment of the Pagan seniors in this introductory game causes much amusement to the "Christians," though Norman quickly shows his mettle by scoring a good try. Evans, burning with resentment against these new comers, plays very roughly, and collars one of the Pagans, Channing, with such force that he breaks his collar-bone. On the following day the new head master announces that in future the school will play Association instead of Rugby.

CHAPTER VI

REBELLION

IT would be difficult to describe the amazement with which the head master's notification was received by the school, for Rugby football was a tradition with Christ's, and had always been followed with the utmost keenness. The late Head went out of his way to choose masters who were distinguished players of the game.

With Rugby, therefore, in their blood, having played it, as it were, almost from the time they left the nursery—for boys went to Christ's at so early an age as ten years—the shock to the Christians may be imagined when they were informed that in future they would have to follow a code of football which hitherto they had held in the utmost contempt.

It may be said that this drastic change, going as it did to the very roots of their school existence, occupied the mind of every Christian in the school, with the exception of the new boys, who were far too home-sick and scared

by their new surroundings to trouble their heads as to what particular game of football they would be expected to play. Nothing else was discussed in class-room, corridor, or playground, and, needless to say, abuse was heaped on the head of the new man in wholesale measure.

The Christian prefects and members of the first fifteen, or such as were left, promptly held a council in the Sixth Form room.

"Well," said Beach, who ranked next to Colebrook in the school, and was a useful forward, "What's to be done?"

A silence followed.

Then Colebrook said, "I don't see what *can* be done. He says we've got to play Soccer, and so we've got to play it, I suppose. The only consolation for most of us is that we haven't got very much longer to stay here, and shall be able to take up Rugger again directly we leave."

"That's a nice thing to say," exclaimed Forrest, who promised to shine as a wing three-quarter. "What about the school?"

"I'm surprised at you, Brookie," put in a lumbering forward named Chester. "Dash it, man! Are we to allow this upstart to deliberately change our game and not say a word? He'll be saying next that football's altogether too rough, and that we had better play rounders. What do *you* say, Black Evans?"

That gentleman, whose sobriquet served to distinguish him from the three other Evanses in the school, had not much to say, but what he had to say was to the point.

"I'm not going to play the beastly game," he replied. "The best thing we can do is to refuse to play it."

So speaking, he deposited his sturdy carcase on a form and bit one of his nails, his dark eyes flashing dangerously the while. Unsatisfactory as, it must be admitted, Evans was as a character, he had one attribute that promised to befriend him during the whole of his life. Every move in the game of his existence was carefully thought out. Therefore when he spoke he generally had something to say, and always meant it. Further, when he stated his intention of doing a thing he always did it.

"Hear, hear!" said Chester. "That's the sort of spirit. What do you say to that, Colebrook?"

Colebrook was not regarded as a person of any great importance. Still, he was the nominal head of the school, and so had to be shown a certain amount of respect.

"Well, to tell you the truth, you men," he said, "I am as upset as any of you over this business, but what on earth is the good of refusing to play? Talbot is head master, and we've got to do what he tells us, or he'll sack the lot of us. He's not the sort of fellow to be trifled with, I can tell you."

"Well, he doesn't seem to have made much of a success of Pageways," sneered Arrowsmith. "It ought to be suggested to him that he might try being trifled with for a change. It might pay."

A good deal of desultory talk followed. The truth was that the leaders of the school did not know how to act. It was suggested that they should consult Mr. Colles, but, as Colebrook pointed out, Mr. Colles could not but support the Head's authority.

While all this chatter was going on Black Evans remained silent.

"Well," said Black Evans, at length, getting up, "*I'm* not going to play, for one. He can't sack the lot of us, and so the best plan is for all of us to stick out. Still, if you're afraid to —don't," and without more words he strolled from the room. He saw that little was to be effected in the way of working up a revolt among the seniors; it was among the sub-prefects and members of the second and third fifteens that he would more readily find people to follow the red flag of revolution he meant to hoist.

A captain always likes to know of capable and reliable lieutenants, and Evans, making his plans in his silent way, sought out Carson and Dawson. He found the inseparables showing Verrey round the school. Their way of doing this was to place themselves on either side of him, grip an arm apiece—like policemen conducting an obstreperous navvy to the police-station—and lead him from point to point, whether he wanted to go or not.

"Leave go of that chap," said Evans, briefly. "I want to speak to you."

Verrey was released, and laughingly retired.

"Put it about," said Evans, "that I'm not going to play this Soccer game."

"You shall be obeyed, generalissimo," said Carson, with a grave bow.

"Never mind about the kids. Get among the big chaps," said Evans.

"Yours to serve you, mightiness," said Dawson, saluting.

"Serve away, then," grunted Evans, turning

away. This mission was entirely to the liking of the partners, and they set to work with energy. Quickly the determination Evans had arrived at flew from mouth to mouth, and was highly approved. The announcement as to the new age-limits that would in future obtain, with their disagreeable taste in the shape of stiff examinations, had already aroused considerable feeling, and the proposed change of football put the finishing touch to the school's dislike for its new ruler. Members of the first fifteen who were not prefects were persuaded to follow Evans, and so a practically unanimous decision was arrived at among the Christians to the effect that they would not play this new game.

After chapel that evening the Head sent for Colebrook.

"Well, Colebrook," he said, pleasantly, when the senior prefect entered, "I want to have a talk with you. Sit down. Now," he went on, "you and I must work together. Smooth relations between head master and head boy are essential to the well-being of the school."

"Yes, sir," said Colebrook.

"I anticipate trouble," said Mr. Talbot, "and I am prepared to meet it. It is not an easy task for any man to take over the headmastership of a school; still less easy is it for him to introduce new ideas and upset old customs. This change of football, now. It will, I know, be exceedingly unpopular among the boys. It is bound to be. The change, I admit, is a very sudden one, but I thought it as well to make it at once rather than to gradually introduce it. At some schools where a feeling in favour of Rugby has gradually come into existence, Association has been played one term and Rugby the other, but that, to my mind, is a most unsatisfactory arrangement. It is impossible for the players to do themselves justice at either code."

Colebrook admitted that this was very true.

"So I have put my axe to the very roots of the tree," said the new Head, "and cut it down. Lopping off the big branches is no good. Apart from the fact that I consider Association the better game for a school placed as Christ's College is—for nearly all the schools round here play Association, and I see by last season's card that you have had to call on Oxford and Cambridge and the London hospitals for opponents at Rugby—you must remember that the forty boys from Pageways whom I have brought with me are to be considered. They represent, I admit, only a quarter of the school, but they are a very influential quarter, and hardly a boy among them has been placed in a lower form than the Fourth. So, Colebrook, I wish you to give me your support in this matter. Should you not find it possible to act with me, tell me so quite frankly."

In this wise did Colebrook find himself at a crisis in his life. During the whole of his school career he had looked forward to being head prefect. This ambition had coloured the whole of his life at Christ's. Now that he held the prize, was it likely that he would let it slip from his hands?

"I will do my best, sir, to support you in every way," he said.

"I am exceedingly glad to hear that," said the new Head, putting out his hand. "You will not find the position an easy one, but I believe you will prove worthy of it. Good night, my boy."

Just as Colebrook was going, however, the head master called him back. "One moment—I have forgotten something," he said. "I wish you to confer with Norman and the other seniors from Pageways, and with the help of your own seniors to divide the school up into elevens to play Association. The best way, of course, will be to keep the school in the order they are now. It can easily be done. Instead of filling up the vacancies in the first fifteen from the second fifteen, you will keep the first team down to eleven, and so on. Some of them, of course, will have to be displaced, because only the boys from Pageways play Association, while the boys here know nothing of it. However, Norman will do his best to help you in that respect. I am myself endeavouring to arrange fixtures with neighbouring schools. We cannot expect to have a full card this term, or even next, but we must do our best."

Colebrook lost no time in holding his conference with Norman, and in order that the new game might be started upon with as little delay as possible they sat up late that night in Colebrook's study rearranging the school and carefully slipping in the Pagans.

"Of course, it is a beast of a shame," said Norman, not unkindly, "but we can't play any matches until you chaps have got to know our game, unless the first eleven is made up entirely from Pageways."

"That wouldn't do at all," said Colebrook. "We must learn it quickly."

He wrote out each eleven very neatly and

clearly on a large sheet of paper which covered nearly the whole of the games board, and when the school came down to roll-call on the following morning each boy found that a place had been allotted to him in the new football scheme. In all there were fourteen elevens. Two boys did not play football, being too delicate, and the last eleven, it must be admitted, was not an eleven at all, but a thirteen.

Chapel followed early school, and as the fellows came out they surged in a huge crowd round the games board. The names of the Pageways fellows looked very strange dotted about among the familiar Smiths, Joneses, Clarkes, Browns, Robinsons, and Evanses of Christ's College.

The crowd increased and the hubbub rose high.

"Get along into breakfast, you fellows!" shouted Colebrook. "You must look at that after." And as he spoke Black Evans arrived at the edge of the crowd, and glared up at the offensive list.

"Here, get out of the way!" he growled, pushing several juniors aside. By using his powerful shoulders with considerable effect and his elbows with still more, he won his way right up to the front of the crowd. His name came next to Colebrook's in the list of the first eleven. As the best Rugby player in the school he had been accorded this distinction. Taking a pencil out of his pocket he calmly crossed it out. This action set the match to the fuse, and by the time morning school began the only names that remained unerased were those of the prefects and Pagans.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHALLENGE

NOW, indeed, the gauntlet had been thrown down, and in no unmistakable fashion. Christ's College had declared war on the new Head, and, there being confidence in numbers, awaited the result not only with excitement, but with a certain amount of equanimity.

Colebrook, as in duty bound, promptly reported the matter to the head master.

"Thank you, Colebrook," said Mr. Talbot. "As I told you last night, I expected trouble. I am much obliged to you for acting so expeditiously. It is just as well for us to get this business over as quickly as possible. Thank you," and with these words he dismissed the head prefect, who went away wondering what steps this decidedly businesslike head master would take. He did not think the Head would put the matter before the governors, as that would be a distinct sign of weakness on his part. He would, he felt sure, handle it himself.

Colebrook saw Norman and told him the matter was in the Head's hands.

"You may depend upon it," said Norman, "that he'll know what to do. You may be certain of one thing, that there will be a game of football this afternoon."

There was. Mr. Talbot had looked on while the game of Rugby had been expounded, if one may put it that way, for his benefit. Now the boys of Christ's College, he determined, should have an opportunity of looking on at a game of Association. But this time the tables would be turned. The Christian prefects who were left would be picked into the two sides. There were only seven of them, but on the other hand there would only be twenty-two players on the ground instead of thirty. Before dinner the Head had issued his instructions, and the sides had been chosen.

It must be admitted that the school looked forward to witnessing this game with more interest than they had evinced on the previous day. Some of them had never seen an Association match in their lives, and as it was half-holiday there was plenty of time for the game, which therefore was scheduled to begin at three.

Long before this the Christians were grouping themselves along the touch-line or wandering about the ground. It was apparent that the new Head was not the man to let the grass grow under his feet, nor yet under the goal-posts, for when the boys went down into the playing fields after dinner they found that the Rugby posts had been removed and Association goal-posts with nets put up in their place. The Christians inspected these new goal-posts with derision. There is a certain majesty about Rugby posts which their more lowly Soccer brothers lack. Nobody who has played the Rugby game can look upon the tall masts of their code without a certain emotion.

The old posts were gone. Nothing could be more typical of the new era upon which Christ's College was starting than the passing of those old friends of many a fierce encounter.

Mr. Colles, who had been a bustling forward in his day, walked on to the field and looked upon this change of emblems with a heavy heart. He had a presentiment that his days at Christ's College were numbered. Though

barely forty he felt old—too old to adapt himself to these altered circumstances. The head mastership of a grammar school which would fall vacant at Christmas had been mentioned to him, and he was now considering it. There was no particular hurry on his part either to accept or reject. At present he was undecided. He had been at Christ's College ever since he left Cambridge, and the place was very dear to him.

Soon after Mr. Colles arrived the deep boom of a football fell on the expectant ear of the Christians, and a brand new Association ball dropped in their midst. Norman had punted it over from the upper field. As a rule, of course, an old ball was kicked about before a game, but in this particular instance there was no old ball to kick. Arrowsmith remarked to someone that it was surprising that the new Head had not even provided that, as he had evidently made up his mind to make the alteration in the code long before the term began. Hence the prompt appearance of these new posts and this new ball.

The Christians assembled on the ground picked up this new-fangled thing, and looked at it with disgust. It seemed to them a clumsy article compared with the swift-flying Rugby ball they had been accustomed to all these years. This ball didn't dance and elude them in the sunshine as a Rugby ball was in the habit of doing. What a thrill it gave one in a match when, playing at full-back, one caught the ball from the kick-off and sent it spinning into touch! One or two boys kicked this new Association ball, and it seemed to them as heavy as lead. They were yet to experience what it would feel like on a wet day.

Some of the Christians who had never seen a game of Soccer wondered what the net behind each goal was meant for, and why a white semicircle had been drawn in front of the goal.

A Pagan planted himself in one of the goals, and the wide-eyed Christians noted that he wore leather gloves. Immediately he was submitted to a fusillade of shots from near and far, and the onlookers were bound to admit it was not bad fun. With a grudging admiration they watched the quick way in which he dealt with every shot rained upon him. Now he would catch the ball and punt it away, now he would meet it with his fist. Once or twice he saved his charge by tipping the ball over the goal-bar. Aware that he was the cynosure of all eyes, the Pagan goal-keeper was careful to acquit himself creditably. For some minutes he remained unbeaten, and then Norman, from about 25yds. out, put in a screw shot which whizzed round the goalie's outstretched hand and found a resting-place in a corner of the net.

"Good shot, sir!" cried one of the Pagans.

And the Christians remembered the cry. So that was a "shot," was it?

And now all the players were on the ground, the seven Rugbeians distinguished from the rest by their close-fitting jerseys, the Pagans wearing shirts open at the neck, with long sleeves, which they were rolling up in preparation for the encounter.

The arrival of the head master was the signal for the match to begin. The teams lined up, the referee—a Pagan, of course—blew his whistle, and Christ's College for the first time in its history beheld a game of Association football played on its green mead.

The Christians, knowing where the head master would take up his position, grouped themselves on the opposite side of the ground, and here they announced the attitude they intended to adopt by bursting into a thunder of ironical applause when Norman kicked the ball off for his side. This, they declared, was a joke. They settled down to watch it as one prepares to watch a pantomime. "Heading" seemed to afford them the greatest amusement. The ball bobbing from head to head extracted shrieks of laughter from the riotous mob. By some means or other one of the bigger revolutionaries had become possessed of a watchman's rattle, an ancient instrument which when vigorously swung created a far-reaching din. This, in the hands of the muscular Evans, who promptly commandeered it, added largely to the discordant uproar in which the match was played. Then Carson and Dawson had provided themselves with penny trumpets, whose bleating note reminded one of a Cup-tie babel.

However, if the Christians were determined to make things as unpleasant as possible for their new schoolfellows, who, by the way, were massed in a body near Mr. Talbot, they had come up against a head master who was equally determined to have his way. Apparently unmoved by the noise, Mr. Talbot watched the game closely, every now and again turning to a member of his staff to make some comment on the play. He noticed with satisfaction that the Christian prefects were picking up the

game far more rapidly than the boys from Pageways had done when playing under strange rules. Mr. Talbot had only recently left off playing Association himself. At his best he had been almost good enough to play for his university, and, quick to discern a performer of promise, he saw that Christ's College, reinforced by the Pageways scholars, ought to turn out a very formidable Association team, and that at no distant period. Every now and then a slight frown contracted his brow as the uproar on the other side of the ground waxed more than usually boisterous. It was not possible for him to make any remark on it, because there is generally plenty of noise at a school match. It was quite apparent to him, however, that this row was being raised of a fell purpose, and it did not take him long to perceive who was the leader of it.

No particular interest was taken in the result of the game. It didn't really matter who won. It was being played simply to explain the new rules which Christ's College had got to adopt. In spite of the fact that the crowd of Christians boced and jeered throughout, it cannot be denied that many of them watched the pretty, scientific play of the boys from Pageways with something of interest. They recognised that the game from a spectacular point of view was an improvement on Rugby. One could follow every move of the ball. The spectators at one end of the ground had not to resign themselves to watching scrum after scrum taking place at the other end, at which distance it was almost impossible to observe individual play. Then, again, there was a certain fascination in seeing the Pageways forwards passing and repassing to one another, or in watching Norman dribble more than half the length of the ground, and finish by banging in a hot shot at goal. Those spectators with an eye for the science of a pastime noted, too, the severe restraint the Pagan full-backs exercised in clearing their lines. When there seemed no reason for letting go at full force it was observed that

Black Evans pushed his way through the crowd, and crossed his name from the list.

they would kick almost gingerly, but when they acted thus the ball never failed to drop near one of their forwards. Here the game presented a great dissimilarity from Rugby, where the object of a drop-kick into touch is to make all the ground possible. Then the pretty, niggling touches of the halves, though regarded by some with scorn, by others were recognised as in a high degree scientific. The difference between the two codes was apparent. Rugby was a game of brawn, dogged pluck and speed, a game in which weight was essential and strength of arm as necessary as strength of leg. In Association, though weight made itself felt in the robust shoulder charge and the determined tackle, and the gift of speed showed itself in the flights of the extreme wing men and the anxious side-by-side races they contested with the full-backs, there was no reason why a man of frail physique should not excel by dint of trickiness and an ability to avoid the charges of more burly opponents. This was not a game, in fact, where mere strength of body would gain a man his colours; added to that strength he must have subtlety of mind, else would he find himself floundering in the mud, beaten and outclassed.

There was naturally much confusion in this first game of Soccer, and the voice of the whistle was often heard in the land. The Christians were for ever being penalised for handling the ball, and a good-humoured roar went up from Pagan and Christian, head master and small boy alike, when Colebrook, forgetting himself, on one occasion picked up the ball and ran like a hare for the enemy's goal-line. A prolonged blast of the whistle called him back, and restarted the game with a free kick that produced the hottest and most exciting piece of play witnessed that afternoon.

From the free kick the ball was dropped ten yards from the goal, where the doughty performer from Pageways already mentioned had been enjoying a good deal of unwelcome leisure. Quickly a shot was put in, but the Pagan caught the ball and flung it out. Back it came with a bang against the cross-bar, dropping among a sea of feet. The goalie dived into this sea and retrieved it, receiving a hack on the wrist which caused him to wear a bandage for a week. But he flung the ball away again, and was only just back between the posts in time to punch away, though not too strongly. The scores were level—a goal apiece. For the moment the watchman's rattle ceased its raucous din, and the penny trumpets were silent. Try as they would, Colebrook's side could not get the ball away. One saw the goalie jumping up and punching like a fiend possessed as the shots were rained upon him, but at last there came one which he could only keep out by sprawling at full length and turning it round the goal-post. A nippy half-back took the corner kick with unerring aim. See it dropping—every Christian, fascinated in spite of himself, watching with parted lips. "A beauty!" says a master, and has hardly spoken when, with a spring and a slight twist of his head, Norman has turned it past the goalie into the net.

"*Goal!*" A cheer comes from the Pagans on the touch-line, and the struggle is over. The players troop back to the centre as the gallant goal-keeper, looking a little crestfallen, gathers the ball from the spot where it is coyly nestling against the net. This decided the game, Norman's side winning by the lead then established—two goals to one.

As the whistle went for "time" the Christians raised a long last whoop, which, though it gave full vent to their feelings of disgust, was really the final death-knell of Rugby football at Christ's College.

Mr. Talbot did not say anything about his plans to his colleagues. The day on which this game was played was a Saturday, and so Christians and Pagans had a week-end in which to discuss the situation before any further move was made by the head master.

On Monday morning, when the boys came down to early school, they discovered that the head master had made his next move, for the games board contained the following notice, written in Colebrook's neat handwriting:—

FOOTBALL

Football will be played every working afternoon between two-thirty and four, and every half holiday between three and five.

A list of the elevens may be seen in the Sixth Form room.

Any boy not turning out to play to-day is to report himself in the Sixth Form room after chapel to-night.

CHAPTER VIII

BLACK EVANS TAKES THE FIELD

THE Christians looked at one another blankly. Little had they expected that the Head's reply to their defiance would be this simple notice. The masters, wiser in their generation, recognised in it a

master-stroke of strategy. The matter had been left in the hands of the prefects, and the prefects, though singly not great individualities, were collectively a powerful body. Some of the old prefects were mild people, but these big fellows from Pageways looked as if they were not to be trifled with.

The rebellious Christians looked to Black Evans for guidance in this crisis. Carson and Dawson, in fact, waited on their chief.

"What are you going to do about this, Fewlass?"

"Play," said Evans.

"Play this beastly game of Soccer?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean to say you're going to give in?"

"Nothing else to do," said Evans.

The partners, disappointed, withdrew. Soon it was known far and wide that Black Evans was going to play. In a dissatisfied, sulky manner, therefore, the school gave in. Their Garibaldi having hauled down his flag, nothing remained to the rebels except to disperse to their homes, still brooding over their wrongs, but, for the time being, vanquished.

For Evans had decided that it would not be good policy to offer opposition *en masse* to the alteration of codes. He felt that he could have organised a very tolerable sort of rebellion, but he had no stomach for the business. For one thing, he liked to act alone, being by nature a scout rather than a general.

Nevertheless, he hated this new Man, and he hated these prim, well-dressed Pagan fellows. He foresaw that, with the new age limit, the rough, easy-going school life from which he had extracted a considerable amount of enjoyment would soon be ended. It meant pack up and go for Black Evans, but before he went he meant to have some fun. Mature in advance of his years, he felt that the place was too small and narrow for him. He wanted to take his place among men and be up and doing. For him there would be no university career, followed by a curacy, and then a quiet parsonage; his should be a life of action. He would return to the wild of his forefathers.

So, prompted by the spirit of dare-devilry which lurked in his blood, he was entertaining himself by plotting out a programme of mischief. On the promptings of impulse there was little that he would not dare and do. And the knowledge that he had a hard, determined man to deal with filled him with a fierce joy. As for the Pagans, he was quietly taking their measure, that of Norman in particular. He was not displeased to notice that they appeared a pretty capable set. It amused him to notice that their attitude towards him was one of cold aloofness, with which was mingled something of apprehension. All except Verrey, who, thanks to his open and trusting nature, was afraid of nobody. When Verrey went into the Lower Fifth room that day after dinner, he found Black Evans writing at a great pace.

"Hallo! Lines?" he asked.

"No, indeed," replied Evans, without looking up. "It's my novel."

"Novel?' cried Verrey. "Is it for the school mag?"

"No," said Evans. "I don't think they'd print it."

"What's it about?" and Verrey planted himself on the form in front of Evans with his elbows on his knees and his face in his hands.

"It is called," said Evans, in his brisk Welsh way, "'Talbot the Tyrant,' and it's about the Man."

"Oh, that's splendid!" cried Verrey. "Do read out what you've written."

"I've written a whole exercise-book full of it. I've just got to chapter three, where he steals a crust from a blind beggar."

"Oh, shut up," said Verrey. "The Man's not as bad as all that!"

"But, look you," said Evans, "it is necessary to lay the colours on thick if you want to impress a reader. If you're going to write about a tyrant, you must make him a tyrant. He not only steals the crust from the blind beggar, but he gives the beggar a box on the ears for whining."

Verrey nearly fell off the desk. "Grand!" he cried. "You must read it to the dorm."

"Would you like to hear my description of the Man?" asked Evans, pleased at this appreciation of his literary efforts. And he read as follows:—

"In appearance Talbot was not what he thought himself to be. He had an idea that he was a fine-looking man, but in reality he had no physique whatever, and walked like a cockchafer with a sprained ankle. His face was pasty and white, and disfigured by red spots, caused by overeating. His nose was beginning to redden at the tip, and on this account, when he went to a temperance meeting, he used to put chalk on it. Instead of a chest, he had a sort of cavity, and his toes turned in so much that they constantly struck against

one another when he walked. His whole appearance, indeed, was of a disagreeable and bilious description, and even his mother used to say that the mere sight of him brought tears into her eyes.' . . . What do you think of that?" he concluded.

"Well, what I think is," said Verrey, "you'd better not let old Tolly see it."

"Don't care if he does," said Evans. "If he did I should say it was about one of my uncles. I have an uncle just like that, if as nice."

He put away his novel, and together they walked down to the football field.

"Look you, I feel like a little horse exercise to-day," said Evans. "Pretty Polly's in the shed; we'll fetch her out."

The shed so-called was a capacious building, for part of it afforded stabling for the retired 'bus-horse which pulled the big roller, and part served as a store-room for such things as the grass mower, the marking machine, and various other articles of athletic equipment.

Evans opened the stable door, and the aged white mare munching hay within looked round apprehensively. It cannot be said that her life at Christ's had ever been a bed of roses, for it was not pleasant now that she was approaching the sere and yellow leaf of equine existence to be compelled to gallop round and round a field with a parcel of small boys pelting her with clods of turf. She was quite willing to pull the roller, for that was a quiet occupation well within her capacity, but when she was retired from the route she had followed for ten years from Kilburn to Liverpool Street, she had hoped to end her days at a walk.

"Come up, my beauty," said Evans, giving the mare a hearty thwack on her broad flank.

A steely, almost vindictive, expression came into the mare's eyes, but Pretty Polly made no protest when Evans seized her halter and led her out into the field.

Several other fellows had sauntered down to the ground, most of them Christians, and these letter, directly they saw Evans with the mare, looked round for such missiles as might be handy.

"Yoicks!" exclaimed Evans, and with the word he leapt on to the mare's back, and, grasping her halter firmly in his hands, drove his heels by no means gently into her sides. When sold to the school for the sum of £16 Pretty Polly had been an even-tempered animal, but the harassing she had been subjected to had turned her sour. As soon as she felt Evans on her back her hind legs shot up, and a less capable horseman would have been propelled over her head, but Evans only held on the more grimly.

"Come up!" he cried, smiting her with the end of the halter.

Finding herself mastered, Pretty Polly set off at a smart trot, which, when she reached the group of waiting Christians, developed into a hand gallop. Before she was well away from them she was flying for her life. Evans was evidently in a mad mood to-day, for after taking the mare round the lower field, which represented a considerable distance, he drove her through the gate into the lane dividing the upper and lower fields, and cantered into the upper field. The groundman was talking to the Head's gardener in the gateway of the garden. Catching sight of the horseman he hallood to him to get off, and ran towards him.

With some strange Celtic yell Evans pulled Pretty Polly aside, dodged the arresting hand of the groundman, and continued on in full career. Amid shrieks of laughter he pelted round the field, and was cantering gaily along the broad sweep of gravel dividing the field from the school buildings when a window was thrown up, and a voice, clear and imperious, summoned him to stop.

It was the head master.

Immediately Evans pulled his horse up to a walk, and headed the animal in the direction of the open window.

"What are you doing on that horse?" was the sharp inquiry which fell upon many listening ears.

"I was just giving it some exercise, sir," said Evans.

"Get off at once!"

Evans got off, and the groundman coming up somewhat out of breath, seized the halter.

"You've well-nigh burst her heart," he growled, pantingly. "Such going on! You'll get it for this!"

The expectant ears waiting for the sequel were soon satisfied.

"You have no right whatever on that horse," said Mr. Talbot. "You will write me five hundred Greek lines, and you are not to go beyond the upper field until they are finished. You are Evans Senior, are you not?"

"Yes, sir," said Evans.

"Very good," said the Head, briefly, and he shut down the window.

The listening boys looked at one another, and then cast a curious glance at Evans. The sentence meant more than a gating. Although a fellow was gated he could still play football, but confinement to the upper field meant no football at all.

Five hundred Greek lines! And it was only with great labour that Evans could write ten. Before half an hour had elapsed every boy in the school had heard of the imposition which had been given to Evans as a recognition of his daring equestrian act, and everybody who knew Evans wondered — whether he would do it.

Evans pulled the mare aside, dodged the hand of the groundsman, and amid shrieks of laughter continued his mad career round the field.

CHAPTER IX

THE TRITON AND THE MINNOWS

EVANS was still a member of the Lower Fifth, and not a member of the top end of it. Some eighteen months previously, an uncle, skipper of a merchant vessel, had promised him a silver watch if he got out of the Fourth Form, where he had been resting on his oars for two years. Thus inspired, Evans, who was not stupid, but wilfully idle, set to work with the utmost diligence—and it is said that when a lazy man works no one works better. It was, of course, a pity that Evans needed a reward to be dazzled before his eyes, but so it was. His general way of escaping detention and impositions was to get clever boys to help him; but, after all, such assistance was of a very vaporous character, for although it helped him to struggle through the hedges and negotiate the water jumps after a fashion, it did not assist him materially in grasping the art of keeping up with his mental hounds and being in at the death—otherwise, promotion.

In order to get that silver watch Evans found it necessary to understand what he was doing. He found he had to take his fences cleanly and to negotiate his water jumps properly—not splash through them—and he did it by the exercise of will power. Work he found quite painful, because, although sharp enough in his way, his sharpness was not of the knowledge-acquiring type. But he found that if he bent his attention to a task, concentrating all his faculties upon it, things in time began to straighten themselves out, and he would grow interested in the mere task, so interested that he was often annoyed when preparation came to an end, for by that time his mind was well aglow, and he felt quite like going on with his work for an hour or two. At that time of course, he had not developed the strident and overbearing personality that we are privileged to behold at present; he was, nevertheless, a gentleman who knew how to look after himself, and if anybody at this period tried to get him to waste time, or indulged in a practical joke, that body got a jolly good hack on the shins for his pains. And as he was at this time a second fifteen half-back and a youngster whom the captain of the first fifteen favoured with a good deal of critical notice, this hacking was an operation of no mean order.

So he got out of the Fourth Form into the Lower Fifth, and won the silver watch; and the possession of this watch developed in him a taste for mechanical engineering. He soon learnt how to take his watch to pieces and put it together again. It became a practice with anybody who was in trouble with his watch to take it to Evans. If you happened to be a friend of Evans's he would mend your watch for nothing, but if you were a person for whom he had no special regard the charge was twopence for repairs. Most people, it need hardly be said, paid him twopence.

Greek Evans had never liked, a shocking Greek paper having nearly kept him down in the Fourth Form. If it had not been for his football that Greek paper would have cost him his place in the Lower Fifth, but the master who examined the Fourth in Greek was a Rugby footballer himself, and so Evans won through.

After receiving his sentence he went to the Lower Fifth room and sat down at a place that had been sacred to him ever since he had been a member of the form. It was in a dark corner, and the most remote from the master's desk. Taking out Euripides' "Medea" which the Lower Fifth were reading that term, he opened a green exercise book containing twenty lines to the page and commenced operations. It was a stupendous task, and yet Evans thought that to have ridden Pretty Polly round the upper field, to have cavorted under the very nose of the head master, to have enjoyed the wild thrill of this thing, had been worth doing. The penalty had been a severe one for what many people would regard as a piece of boyish foolishness, but Evans had the satisfaction of knowing that it would be inscribed in unwritten annals of Christ's College, and would be related with hearty chuckles for many years to come.

He wrote steadily for a quarter of an hour, and then threw down his pen. This was very trying. He was beginning to think that one might pay too dearly for a ride on Pretty Polly. This would mean no football for three or four days. Evans bit his pen and frowned. No football? Wait a minute. He was not to go beyond the upper field. Still, there was football in the upper field—football of a kind. He would go out and look at it.

He found the two kids' games just starting. The goal-posts consisted of flags of the kind that are used at the corners of a football ground. To get a goal you had to kick the ball between the flags.

Evans walked up to one of the captains of the sixth game. "Hallo, Topping," he said, "Which side am I on?"

Topping blushed and stammered. By small fry like himself it was considered an honour even to speak to Evans.

"Look here, I'll be on your side," said Evans, "and you can give them two more men. You see," he added, gently, "I am not allowed to go beyond the upper field, and so I must play with you. Now, I'll keep goal."

"Oh, will you?" said Topping, only too pleased to get the help of such a celebrity. "That's awfully jolly."

"Come on, play up," said Evans, taking his place between the two flags.

The small boys had taken up the game very quickly. It was, of course, a game far more suitable for their years and size than Rugby. The niceties of it, of course, they ignored, the one object being to get the ball between the flags. Properly, a master should have been there to instruct them—Mr. Talbot having expressed his wishes to the staff in this respect—but for some reason he had not come out yet; so the small boys lined up in two long rows, not being particular whether they played forward, half-back, or back, and the game resolved itself simply into a kick and rush at goal. On each side the most insignificant and weak-looking boy was placed in goal, that being considered the least important and most undesirable position on the field for anyone to hold.

Very soon a shot was banged in at Evans. He caught the ball in his open hand and threw it more than half-way down the ground. A member of his side, well up towards the opposing goal—and also well off-side, had anybody known anything about the rules—promptly pounced upon the ball, dribbled it up and kicked a good goal, the infant between the flags making only the very feeblest effort to stop him.

It now occurred to Evans that as they were playing Soccer they might as well play it properly, so as the ball was brought back to the middle of the ground, he walked out of his goal and harangued the mob, and, in accordance with his queer sense of humour, he harangued them in the style of the head master, as thus:—

"Boys, I have a few words to say to you." The youngsters were all attention. "It is usual, boys," proceeded Evans, "in this pastime, fit only for girls and centenarians, for the players to occupy certain places in the field. So far, the only position which you seem to recognise is that of goal-keeper. Now, boys, I should like to point out a fact that does not yet seem to have occurred to you. The position of goal-keeper is an important one. By goals the match is lost and won. Yes, indeed. A good goal-keeper, boys, can often save a match when his side is obviously the inferior one. So you must always put the smartest, quickest, and tallest man on your side in goal." (The smartest, quickest, and tallest man on either side was the captain, who did not look at all pleased at this prospect.) "In front of the goal are the two full-backs. They must be heavy and quick, and good kicks, look you. Even girls and centenarians when they play this game put the heaviest girls and centenarians at full-back. You put a heavy man at full-back because he often has to knock the forward off the ball. Now, in front of the full-backs there are the three half-backs, and these ought to be the three most active men in the team, because they have more to do than anybody else. They are forwards, boys, as well as backs. They have to be able to turn quickly. Then we come to the forward line. This consists of five men who are speedier than the rest. The centre man must be a boy who knows how to shoot hard and well at goal—Topping, for instance, ought to develop into an ideal centre-forward." (Pleased confusion of Topping.) "But the fastest men of all ought to be the outside right and the outside left, and it is the duty of the centre-forward to see that these men are kept well fed with passes. Some teams play what is called the short passing game, it will interest you to know, my lads, but perhaps the long passing game is the more profitable, because it keeps the other side constantly on the run. The player on the outside left or right should speed along the touch-line with the ball, and as the opposing full back is descending upon him to check his career, two courses are open to him: he can either try to get past the full-back, or, when threatened, kick the ball into the centre towards the goal. Your conduct, boys, in this particular, depends upon the strength of the full-back opposed to you. If you find that he robs you of the ball every time and in the course of it sends you to the ground with a heavy crack, it is better to centre the ball.

"We will now arrange the sides according to this plan, because if we have to play the game that is so popular with girls and

centenarians we might as well play it properly. Now, Topping, will you kindly arrange your field as I have described, with no alteration whatever? And you, Malpas, you will also arrange your side, and remember, both of you," concluded Evans, "to rebuke any player who wanders from his position."

Quickly grasping Evans's directions, Topping and Malpas began to distribute their forces accordingly. Each being the biggest boy on his side went to full-back, for not even Evans could make them take what they still considered the unimportant position of goal-keeper. Besides, on Topping's side there was already a goal-keeper of considerable ability.

The youngsters required a good deal of pushing and pulling before they realised what positions they were to occupy, but at last both teams were arranged in due order, and the game was restarted.

Even now it developed into little more than a scramble, for it seemed impossible for the boys to keep their places. The rush and excitement of the game often caused a full-back to desert his position and indulge in an individual dribble towards the opposite goal.

When they changed over at half-time Topping's side had scored three goals, but so far Evans had kept his citadel intact, although not without difficulty, for the boys playing against him invariably dribbled the ball very close to the goal before they dreamed of trying to kick it through the flags. Evans, therefore, had to run out and stop their progress, or to take it, as it were, off their very feet.

It will be apparent that Evans was no stranger to Soccer, and this was not surprising. Now, the small seaside town of which Evans's father was vicar, on account of its bracing air and the absence of temptations to be frivolous (the wildest excitement being an occasional concert in the principal hall of the place), was a favourite resort of football teams in the West Midlands and Midlands. There was an Association ground close to the wind-blown and barely furnished domicile known by the name of the Vicarage, and upon this the professionals were allowed to disport themselves during their period of training. Always on the look-out for a little amusement, Evans had ingratiated himself with these professionals, and had been allowed to take part in their practice games, and he did this in spite of the fact that he played full-back for the town at Rugby when football was in season. Evans had therefore developed into a master of both codes.

"I'll keep goal for Malpas now," said Evans at half-time. "Now, gentlemen and convicts, play up. Remember, you are three goals down on this side. Whenever you get near goal shoot. Don't bother to get close to it, and do keep your places. Armstrong, you insignificant son of a gun, what's the matter?"

"Twisted my ankle," mumbled Armstrong. "It hurts frightfully."

"Go and put it under the tap in the playground," said Evans, "and then stick a bit of stamp paper on it. That means we play a man short. Never mind," and with a wild Cambrian whistle he gave the signal for the game to restart.

Cheered on by having such a bulwark of strength in goal, Malpas's men played like furies. They bore down on the Topping goal with mad rushes, but they met with a stubborn resistance. The game therefore resolved itself into a sort of pitched battle in front of the goal, and Evans found himself left with very little to do. A man of his big physique needed a good deal of exercise to keep in condition, and so by way of whiling away the time he described a few Catherine-wheels. This exercise causing his blood to flow briskly, he proceeded to stand on his head and clack his boots together, and it was while he was poised in this not very dignified attitude for a man of his years and celebrity that he found he was being regarded with an expression in which amusement, curiosity, and contempt were strangely mingled, by a young lady of apparently fifteen or sixteen years of age, dressed in a very useful-looking blue coat and skirt, topped by a broad-brimmed straw hat with a coloured ribbon on it, who was standing some twenty yards from his goal.

Evans found his feet with an alacrity that would not have shamed a professional acrobat, and, looking very sheepish, was turning round to see how the game was faring when a loud cry of "Look out, Evans!" informed him that he had been caught napping.

But it was too late for him to be of service to his side. Topping, having broken through the hurly-burly, had dribbled the ball straight in front of him, and when arrived within a fair shooting distance of goal let fly, Evans just failing to stop the ball as it flew inside one of the flags.

When the ball had been returned to the centre of the ground to be kicked off, and the

Malpas brigade were again pressing down upon Topping's column, the young lady approached the Welshman.

"You haven't told them about off-side yet," said the young lady.

"I didn't want to tell them too much at once," said Evans. "I'll tell them that next time."

It seemed to him all at once that he had very large hands and very large feet, and that his clothes were very old and shabby, also that standing on his head hadn't improved the look of his black locks.

"Aren't you rather big to be playing with these little boys?" asked the young lady, after a short silence.

"I'm gated," said Evans, "gated as far as this field, you know."

"What for?" she demanded.

"Riding a horse round it," said Evans.

"Dear me!" and the young lady's blue eyes opened very wide. "What a funny thing to be gated for. Still, it is not usual for the boys to ride horses round the field, is it?"

"No, not usual," said Evans. "That's why I did it."

"Oh," said the young lady, and she regarded Evans with a long stare. "Is it because it is not usual for boys to do such things that you stood on your head just now?"

Evans was getting a little irritated by this cross-examination, but he couldn't deny to himself that there was a certain charm about his interrogator. It was not often that such a creature as this was seen within the bounds of Christ's College. Sometimes girls came to watch the football matches, but they were always with governesses or mammas.

"Well, I stood on my head," said Evans, "because I was tired of standing on my feet.'

"Well, will you do it again?" asked the fair apparition.

"No, indeed," said Evans. "At least, I beg your pardon," he added, a little less gruffly, "but I should not have done it had I known you'd been looking on."

Though not versed in such matters, it occurred to Evans that the young lady pouted a little at this answer, but she did not attempt to make any remark, for at that moment she was sharply hailed.

On the path some distance away stood the head master and Mrs. Talbot.

"Cecile!" called the Head, sharply.

"Yes, father, I'm coming," said the girl.

"By George!" breathed Evans. "I bet he *will* be wild!"

"What were you talking to that boy for?" asked Mr. Talbot when Cecile reached her parents.

"Why, father," said Cecile. "I always used to talk to the boys at Pageways and you didn't mind."

"It was different at Pageways," said Mr. Talbot.

"I don't see why it should be," said Cecile, with a toss of her head. "You said it was nice for boys to talk to a girl like me now and then. You said it made them remember their manners."

"Well, in future," said Mr. Talbot, "you will please remember that you are not to talk to the boys here. They are rather rough. That boy you were speaking to, for instance, is quite the roughest boy in the school."

"Oh," said Cecile, with her chin in the air, "but I am sure he is quite a gentleman."

"Please understand that you are not to speak to him, or to any other boy here until I give you permission," rejoined the head master, sternly.

Cecile Talbot had not been able to return to her school at the usual time on account of an outbreak of an epidemic in the town, and had arrived at the school only the previous night after a visit to a schoolfellow. Her father felt distinctly annoyed about the epidemic.

"There's one boy here, sir, who understands Soccer," said Mr. Carter, the master who had accompanied the Head from Pageways."

"Oh!" said the Head, "who is it?"

"That boy Evans Senior," said Mr. Carter. "He was putting the youngsters through their paces finely this afternoon. He did it so well that I thought I wouldn't interfere."

The Head said nothing. The information gave him no pleasure, for he had made up his mind that he would rid the school of the doubtful advantage of Evans Senior's presence at the first available opportunity.

CHAPTER X

"TALBOT, THE TYRANT"

"AN *incorrigible*!"

The head master sat at his desk with a dark frown upon his strong, ascetic face. For the third time, in the briet period that he had held his new position, this boy Evans had forced himself prominently on his notice. He had caught him in a tobacconist's shop; he had gazed with the deepest displeasure upon what he considered Evans's

barbarous footballing methods; and now the fellow had had the impudence to career round the school grounds, beneath his own study windows, indeed, upon the aged quadruped whose proper and only sphere was the shafts of the big roller.

Such fellows as this, Mr. Talbot determined, should enjoy but a short shrift. They represented the tares that must be plucked up by the roots in order that the good wheat of a school might flourish. No doubt, thought Mr. Talbot, the boy would soon be guilty of some glaring and unpardonable offence that would serve as an excuse for ridding the school of his presence for ever. Possibly he would not only fail to do the lines, but in addition break the severely restricted bounds imposed upon him until they should be done. For such flagrant insubordination there could only be one penalty.

Evans, however, had no intention of carrying his contumacious conduct too far. Though convinced that his further residence at Christ's would be brief, he yet desired to see how the school would fare under the new *régime*. He felt that he would like to last out till Christmas, at any rate. So, while Mr. Talbot, in his heart of hearts, was harbouring a hope that the boy would ignore the imposition, Evans, with brief grunts of annoyance, was forming Greek characters in a slow and laboured manner. Though his brain worked quickly enough, his hand followed it but sluggishly. His writing was thick and square; he used a prodigious amount of ink, and a new steel nib pressed into his service enjoyed but a brief existence, while the holder, gnawed at frequent intervals by those strong white teeth, fared little better.

Dismissing Evans from his mind, Mr. Talbot turned to a task which promised to be as exciting in its way as the handling of these turbulent Christians. He was writing to the head masters of neighbouring public schools—any school within forty miles, in fact—with the object of arranging Association matches for Christ's College. This, he foresaw, was likely to prove a thankless undertaking. Every school would by now have filled its card; one could only hope to snap up vacant dates here and there. He had consulted Colebrook on this matter, and Colebrook had promptly produced last term's cricket card, which contained the names of several Association-playing schools.

"Ah! this will be very helpful," said the Head. "I had not thought of it. I am obliged to you, Colebrook."

The head prefect also suggested the names of several "Soccer" schools that Christ's had no cricket fixtures with, and thus the Head found himself in possession of at least nine potential opponents. In addition, he had up his sleeve the names of several old college friends who might bring down scratch teams, and these he mentioned to Colebrook.

"But, of course," he added, "we want to play, first and foremost, good schools in the neighbourhood. The better the schools the better our card will look—eh, Colebrook? Now, what, to your knowledge, is the biggest school accessible to us which plays Association?"

"Pulborough," said Colebrook, promptly. "But, of course, they won't play us."

"'Of course!'" The Head lifted his eyebrows. "Why, 'of course'?"

"Once when we were very strong we tried to arrange cricket fixtures with them, but they wouldn't have us."

"On account of what they considered the cricket strength of the school, or—its status?"

"Its status, I'm afraid, sir. In the previous cricket season we had put up a very good fight against the M.C.C., and we had beaten the Stoics and Wanderers, both playing several county men. So, as we had most of the old colours staying on, we challenged them."

"And what form did their refusal take?"

"They said they didn't play private schools," replied Colebrook with some bitterness.

"Oh!" the head master's firm mouth grew a shade firmer. "Nevertheless, Colebrook, I will write to Pulborough."

Mr. Talbot was not the man to let the grass grow under his feet, and before the evening post went out he had written to all the schools which might prove possible opponents. While announcing the change of codes at Christ's, he took care to mention that the school had taken unto itself new blood which contained a number of competent performers at the Association game.

And now another thought occurred to him. A head prefect had been selected; as yet, however, there was no football captain. Colebrook had been the nominal captain so far, but he was undoubtedly far from being the best footballer, and possibly not even worth his place in the first team. It would be a pity, thought the Head, to have a weak spot in the shape of captain. He consulted one of the staff, and learnt that at the beginning of the season it was the custom for the three top forms to meet in the library and elect their

captain. Mr. Talbot perceived certain faults in this scheme. He saw that such a plan would not always result in the best man being chosen; rather in the most popular man being chosen, and strength of character, as he knew, does not always attain popularity. Sometimes, indeed, it is the reverse, the weak and amiable fellow being popular because other people do not scrape up against the jagged edges which often mark a man of will and determination. However, if that was the rule of the school, said the Head, so let it be.

Overnight, Colebrook gave notice that the election would be held on the following day after morning school. The news quickly spread, and was the sole topic of conversation. It was felt that only three fellows stood a chance of election—Colebrook, Norman, and Evans—and electioneering was confined to these three. The Pagans would, of course, plump for Norman, and the danger lay in the fact that the Christian vote would be split between Colebrook and Evans. It was, therefore, the Christian voters of the Sixth and Upper and Lower Fifth who were buttonholed and argued with by strenuous orators of the Carson and Dawson order. During the last day or two Norman, foreseeing the election, had been unbending graciously towards some of the Christian seniors, and it was feared that a few of these might be fickle enough to give him their support. Carson and Dawson quickly drew up crude placards bearing the urgent message:—

"VOTE FOR
EVANS
AND THE OLD BRIGADE!"

The Pagans, who were beginning to feel their feet, and knew that what they lacked in quantity they made up for in quality, replied with the counter placard:—

"VOTE FOR
NORMAN
WHO KNOWS THE GAME!"

But Colebrook had plenty of supporters, for, although the head prefect was no great footballer, the Welshman had hardly endeared himself to the seniors. The Colebrookians, to whom Arrowsmith acted as whip, conducted their electioneering in a quieter way, Arrowsmith, by writing a number of notes with an R.S.V.P. at the foot of each, soon being in possession of a number of solid promises which made his man's chances look hopeful. When the actual time of voting arrived, these men, he knew, would not change their minds, and as neither Norman nor Evans had earned popularity of the type won by Colebrook, there was a chance that eleventh hour support would be found among those who now looked like members of the two rival camps.

That an election was toward even a deaf man would have gathered from the strenuous party cries that rent the air of corridor and dormitory. Long after "Lights out" Carson and Dawson were endangering their liberty for the next month by gliding in and out of other dormitories in order to promulgate their doctrines in hoarse whispers. The Pagans would not be howled down, and proclaimed their hero in lusty voices; for the first time Pagans and Christians came to blows, and there were several stand-up fights in which honours were pretty evenly divided. Tranquillity did not touch the school with her soothing hand until a late hour, and early on the morrow the air was electric with excitement, for a contest of this kind was an entire novelty, there having been little doubt in previous years as to how the election would go.

When the hour of the poll arrived, the three top forms assembled in the library, while the rest of the school thronged the adjacent corridors. There was not an absentee voter; each party's whip had seen to that.

Beach, of the Christians, and Franklin, of the Pagans, were chosen to be scrutineers. Both were quiet, level-headed men, of whose fairness nobody entertained the slightest doubt. Each voter was given a slip of paper containing the names of the three candidates, and instructed to put a cross opposite the name of his selection. The scrutineers then placed themselves by the door, each armed with a hat, and each voter, as he passed out of the library, dropped his voting slip, folded, into one of the hats. When all had passed out, the door was closed and locked on the mob that pressed round it.

The scrutineers abstaining from voting, there remained sixty-one voting papers to be counted.

The school contained its impatience as it could, knowing that the careful men inside would take their time. Seniors and juniors were mingled indiscriminately in the corridors, and several of the masters, still in cap and gown, were to be descried waiting for the result on the outskirts of the crowd. Which was it to be—Christian or Pagan?

(Another long instalment of this splendid serial in the next number of THE CAPTAIN, *on sale Wednesday, November 22.)*

Great Football Competition

First Prize - - A MAGNIFICENT BICYCLE

(From Messrs. RUDGE WHITWORTH)

Second Prize - Goods to the Value of Three Guineas

(From Messrs. A. W. GAMAGE)

AND TWENTY SPECIAL CONSOLATION PRIZES

Consisting of Footballs, Hockey Sticks, Boxing Gloves, Rifles, Cameras, and so on, illustrated on the Prizes Page.

For full particulars see "Between You and Me."

Each of these Pictures represents a well-known Football Team.

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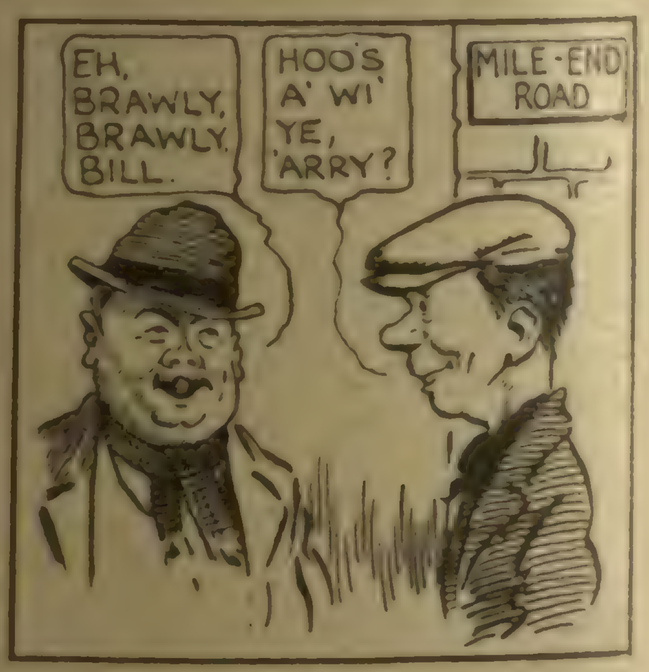

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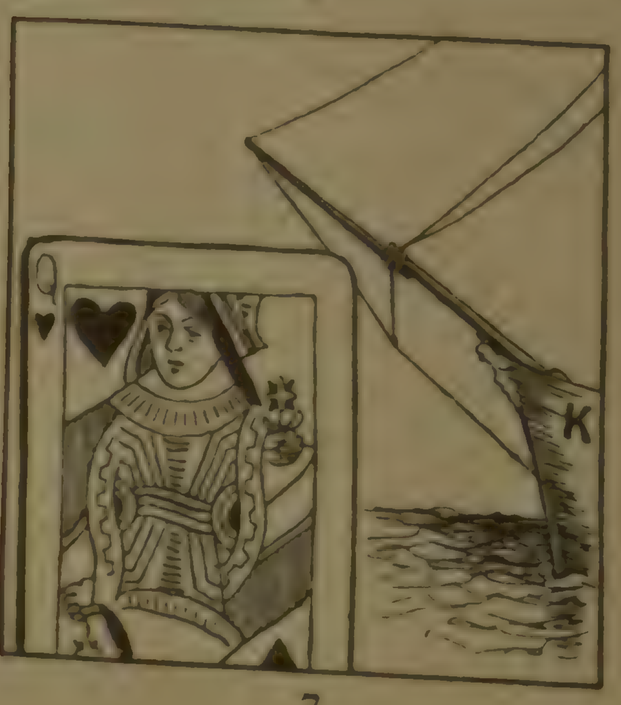

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BETWEEN JUST YOU AND ME

MY MONTHLY TALK WITH "CAPTAIN" READERS

BY THE EDITOR

SOUTHAMPTON STREET,
STRAND, LONDON.

Our new football competition.—Every reader who is thinking of going in for the Football Competition—and what sensible boy is not—will be looking in my Editorial pages for some information concerning the conditions which govern this contest.

On the opposite page appear nine pictures, each of which represents the name of a well-known football club, Rugby or Association, in the British Isles. You are asked to find out which club each picture stands for.

In the December and January numbers of THE CAPTAIN a further set of pictures will be published. *Do not send in answers each month*, but wait till all the pictures have been published. The last day for sending your answers will be announced in the January CAPTAIN.

To each of the pictures a certain number of marks has been allotted for the correct solution. The competitor who gains the greatest number of marks will win the first prize. If there is a picture you cannot solve, do not hesitate to send in your other answers, for other competitors may make mistakes too.

You are not asked to cut out the page. All you need do is to send a list of answers, *in the correct order*, on a sheet of paper.

With your answers you must send *three* competition coupons—one each for November, December, and January. The November coupon will be found on the Prizes Page in the advertisements section.

One solution only must be given to each picture. Any infringement of this rule will mean disqualification. But if you wish to have two tries, you must send in another complete list of answers, with a coupon attached to all.

In the event of a tie neatness may be considered in awarding the prizes, and the Editor's decision must be accepted as final. You can only enter the competition on condition that you accept his ruling in every respect.

Remember not to send in your answers till all the pictures have been published. Read the rules carefully, and get your friends to help you solve the pictures.

A magnificent number.—I do not know whether my readers peruse my editorial pages first, or give preference to the serials and complete stories. If it happens that they read the pages of THE CAPTAIN through in regular rotation, then by the time they come to this paragraph I feel sure they will have formed the opinion that the November number of our magazine is indeed a first-class one from every point of view. I am confident that "The Tiger of Batol," one of the most thrilling and adventurous yarns ever penned, will gain me thousands of new friends, and I ask every Captainite who has enjoyed reading the first instalment to pass his copy on, or to talk about Captain Richard Benson's enthralling story to at least one friend who is not a regular supporter of my magazine.

All this leads me to the announcement that the next number of THE CAPTAIN will be, if anything, even better than its predecessor. The December number, out on Wednesday, November 22nd, will contain, of course, another long instalment of "The Tiger of Batol," as well as of "Black Evans," a story which is going still further to increase the popularity of its clever author, Mr. R. S. Warren Bell; and last, but not least, Mr.

John Mackie's amazingly clever picture of life in the Australian bush.

Coming to the complete tales there will be a telling story of school life and winter sport written by the ever-popular Harold Avery. Years come and go, but still Mr. Avery retains his position as one of the foremost writers of boys' stories in this country, and in the latest from his pen, "Burying the Hatchet," he surpasses himself. I am glad to announce also that next month's CAPTAIN will have another "Foozle" story. At the present time there is no funnier or more popular boys' character than Foozle, and in "Foozle's Christmas," the title which I have given to Mr. Gunby Hadath's new yarn, I am giving you something which is screamingly funny from start to finish.

Now the December CAPTAIN, in a manner, forms the Christmas number, and so, although it does not actually come out at the time when Christmas festivities are seasonable, I cannot let it appear without at least one special Christmas story. You have this in "Highwayman Jack," an original and exciting narrative of how a number of boys in the good old days brought to book a famous highwayman. The author of "Highwayman Jack" is new to our pages, and I predict that his first contribution will bring him at once into general popularity.

A word or two about the articles will be sufficient to convince even the most critical that the next issue of THE CAPTAIN will be well worth getting. Some special instructions on how to kick a Rugby football, by Mr. Harry Alexander, the famous International, will appeal to every boy who favours the Rugby code. Then there will be the second of Mr. Champneys' instructive articles on boxing, a deal of valuable information on stamp collecting by THE CAPTAIN Stamp Expert; "Models and Model-Making," by Mr. Henry Greenly, and further sets of the two competitions.

I would ask every loyal Captainite, when he has read this paragraph, and convinced himself that the December issue must on no account be missed, to place an order with his newsagent well in advance. In fact, he could not do better than order his copy TO-DAY.

My new paper.—THE CAPTAIN has been running for so many years now that I have gathered round me tens of thousands of friends—boys, young men, and adults; and as month succeeds month I find the circle ever widening, until now there is not a corner of the globe where the English tongue is spoken where I do not number some enthusiastic supporter who will listen when I appeal for his assistance. I do so in this issue of my magazine on behalf of the new boys' paper about which most of my readers have already seen the announcements. Elsewhere in these pages will be found quite a number of references to the *Boys' Best Story Paper*, and here I want to say a few words about the contents of this splendid pennyworth.

First and foremost it is a paper for manly British boys. In other words, it is a penny weekly which every Captainite can buy. The stories in it are first class, the pictures are excellent, the articles are interesting and instructive, the tone of the whole paper from the first page to the last is sound and clean and healthy. What more than this can any fellow ask for? Those of you who feel that THE CAPTAIN is so good that you would like to get it every week instead of every month can now fill the gap by supporting the *Boys' Best*. Each issue contains long instalments of four splendid serials: "Tom at Melfield," a laughable tale of school life; "The Black Star," a grand detective story of Gilbert Gray and his boy friend Patsy; "Bob Hollins's Quest," a romance of adventure in every quarter of the globe; and "Be Prepared," a stirring story of boy scouts. In addition there are "Tales of the Champion's Club," each story dealing with some particular branch of sport, including boxing, football, and wrestling; "The Adventures of Captain Cartridge," one of the most fascinating and daring characters ever put into the pages of fiction; and articles on stamp collecting, sports, and on how to make useful articles.

The *Boys' Best*, then, is a paper which any lad can take home or to school. Parents will allow you to read it; schoolmasters will approve of it. It appears every Friday, its price is one penny, and in my opinion it is the brightest and best story journal in the world. If you were unfortunate enough to miss Nos. 1 and 2, you can still obtain them by placing an order with your newsagent. No. 3 is on sale to-day, and No. 4 will be out on Friday, October 27th.

You will do me a personal favour by writing and telling me what you think of the *Boys' Best*. To the sender of the criticism which in my opinion is the best I shall forward a postal order for 10*s.* 6*d.*, and to the senders of

the ten next best criticisms I will send a presentation book. Every letter should be accompanied by the declaration that the writer has bought the current number of the *Boys' Best*, and if he is satisfied that it is a fine pennyworth, intends to remain a regular reader of it. Envelopes should bear the words "Boys' Best" in the top left-hand corner.

NO ROOM FOR HIM

G. H. COLLINS, of Halifax, is a Captainite with a grievance. First of all he complains that he hated his school which he has just left; then he says that there is no one in England who cares anything at all about him. Finally, he would rather turn his back on the Old Country and see if a new one would appeal to him more. "Do you think," he asks me, "that I should stand a chance of getting a post in Australia?"

To begin with, let me read G. H. Collins a short moral lesson. England is all right, the opportunities it has to offer are all right, its people are all right, but I fear very much that it is G. H. Collins who is out of tune with all his surroundings. If I were he I would try very hard to take a more cheerful view of life, and try to find good where now there seems nothing but evil; to look for a smile where now there is only a scowl; to encourage and merit kind words where at present, perhaps, bitterness and reproof are invited.

After all, my dear boy, life is very much what we make it. If we look on the dark side and regard everything as amiss, assuredly we shall find it so. Therefore, G. H. Collins, just buck up, cultivate a cheerful, bright outlook on life, and if you are really serious in your desire to emigrate to Australia then, for goodness' sake, go only with the resolve that your project shall turn out all right.

I fear, however, that you won't be able to work your passage, for this custom has, to a large extent, fallen into disuse since the reduced fares of £8 came into operation. However, if you are still determined to get a free passage, it may interest you to learn that there are no soft jobs to be found on a modern steamer. The only job a skipper will give to an inexperienced hand is that of trimming coal—as hard a one as you will find in the whole world, I should think. At the best of times the atmosphere is stifling, in the tropics it is almost unbearable, and the task of wheeling or shifting huge loads of coal from the bunkers down to the firemen would tax the strength of a Hercules. Many a stout-hearted fellow has undertaken the job cheerfully enough, but after a day's work he has had to go aft to the skipper and ask for something easier. He is not, as a rule, received sympathetically, and, unless literally incapable of the work, the poor fellow has to toil below during the weary weeks of the passage. When he lands in the new country he is three or four pounds in pocket, and the possessor of muscles developed to bands of iron.

For lads with relatives or friends already in Australia there are nomination passages. These are obtained by the Australian friend going to the nearest Government agent and telling him the name, address, and various other particulars of the boy he wants to have out. A letter is then sent home to England, authorising the issue of a ticket for £4 for the entire passage to Australia.

THE RULE OF THE ROAD

"MERCO" is a Devizes reader, who asks me to tell him something about the rule of the road, and how in its present form it came into use.

Until the middle of the eighteenth century there was no proper rule of the road. Pedestrians were divided into two classes, as Dr. Johnson informs us—those who took the wall, and those who gave it. The former were the people who kept under the shelter afforded by the wall, whilst the others were those who were obliged to step out in the mire and mud of the road to make room. Naturally, when two men met, and neither would give place to the other, there was sure to be trouble, and many a street fray originated in this manner.

The custom of wheeled traffic keeping to the left was, until recently, restricted to the British Isles and to the city of Rome. In America and all Continental countries vehicles keep to the right, although there is some talk of changing the rules in Paris to conform with those practised in London.

In some German cities the traffic regulations are so strict that the question of crossing the road assumes many difficulties. Pedestrians are not allowed to turn round and retrace their steps; they must walk to a certain spot, cross the road, and then return on the opposite side, as passengers are only allowed to walk on the pavements in one direction. As a general rule, however, Continental traffic is left very much to chance, and if drivers collide, they must sort themselves out as best they can.

KEEN ON DETECTIVES

D. H. P. informs me that he is keenly interested in detectives and their work. He says: "I have long been puzzled to know how police officials succeed in identifying criminals by means of finger or thumb-prints."

The following particulars concerning this very important branch of criminal investigation and detection will, doubtless, be read with extreme interest by D. H. P.

Sir Edward Henry, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, when he was Inspector-General of the Police Force in India, invented and tested very thoroughly the finger-print system. He discovered, after thousands of experiments, that no two persons have similar markings on their fingers, and, what is perhaps quite as important, that the lines do not vary on a man's fingers from the moment he is born until the day of his death. An old man of eighty has precisely the same finger print that he had when an infant in long clothes!

The technical method of taking a finger-print is simple in the extreme. The edge of the bulb or tip of the thumb or finger is dabbed on to a tin or slab of stone smeared with printer's ink. The finger is then rolled over once so that it is entirely covered with ink. A clean sheet of paper is then taken, and the inky finger pressed against it, thereby leaving a clear impression of every line in the skin.

For purposes of classification these finger-prints are divided into four groups—arches, loops, whorls, and composites. These divisions are subdivided and arranged in such a way that any print can be classified or traced at a few minutes' notice. At

Scotland Yard there are thousands of these prints, and any one of them can be referred to within two or three minutes.

When produced as evidence in court the prints are usually photographed and enlarged many times, as, to a lay eye, it is difficult to distinguish the prints from one another in their natural size.

Many a criminal has been identified solely by the trace of a finger-tip on a glass or against the white paint of a door. In their efforts to elude the police and escape detection, professional burglars frequently do their work in gloves, but for the clumsy and brutal felon, finger-prints make deadly evidence towards a conviction.

ABOUT ANOTHER "CAPTAIN"

A READER of THE CAPTAIN asks me to give him some particulars about another *Captain* which, unfortunately, came to a very sad end. I can remember hearing my parents speak with hushed voices of the terrible disaster which befell that ill-starred vessel, although the sad event took place before I was born.

There are many people who still remember the shock of horror which ran through England when the news came to hand that the great vessel from which so much was expected had capsized off Cape Finisterre with five hundred souls aboard.

The monument in St. Paul's to the memory of the crew who were lost on board the *Captain* must have set many a boy thinking. The story of the disaster is briefly this: The *Captain* was a new boat built after a new type which, it was expected, would combine the advantages of steam with the sailing powers of the old-time frigates. To test her capabilities she was undergoing various trials off the coast of Spain in 1870, and the admiral and his staff were keenly interested to see how she would behave. On the evening of September 6th, after a day aboard the new vessel, the admiral returned to his flagship, and, as a storm seemed hovering about and the wind was freshening for a gale, he gave the signal for the fleet to be prepared. Soon after, just as darkness fell, the storm swept up, and during the night a white squall raged for a couple of hours.

When day broke the fleet assembled, but the *Captain* was missing! It was at first thought she had steamed off in the gale, but as time went on the terrible truth began to dawn upon everybody. Later on bits of wreckage were picked up, and one or two corpses floated by to confirm the awful news.

It was not until some while later that a message came from the port of Corenbion to say that eighteen men had arrived in safety. Their tale was soon told to the horror-stricken public. A huge sea had suddenly struck the ship, she had quivered a moment, listed heavily to one side, and then capsized bodily, only a few of those on deck even having a chance to escape. Of these few who took to the boats, only eighteen arrived to tell the tale of one of the greatest disasters that ever befell the British Navy.

HOW TO KEEP GOLDFISH

HARRY PARSON, of Dalston, asks me if I know the best way to keep goldfish. The chief thing you have to take care of in keeping such pets is to see that they are properly and sufficiently fed. It is a great mistake to imagine that fish can find enough food from the water in which they are kept. They want feeding properly with "ants' eggs" and any crumbs of stale bread that may be obtainable.

The best plan is to keep fish in a tank filled with pond or stream water, *i.e.*, not water drawn from a tap. Pond water contains an enormous quantity of minute insects which are the natural food of fishes, whilst the addition of a few weeds will make them feel almost at home. In any case the water must be changed at least once a week, as it will otherwise become stale and will probably call forth remarks from higher authority.

AN AMBITIOUS LAD

A CLERKENWELL reader requests me to tell him how to qualify for a London County Council clerkship.

I am very pleased to get my Clerkenwell reader's letter, because it shows me that in him I have a supporter who is fired with the ambition to succeed.

The examinations about which he inquires are open to all British boys between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three, and are not prohibitively severe. The following subjects are obligatory:—

Handwriting and spelling.
English composition
Arithmetic.
Geography.
History.
Euclid.
Algebra.
Plane Trigonometry.

When the candidate has passed in these subjects he is entitled to enter for the second part of the examination, and he may take any five of the following subjects, of which the first *must* be one:—

General knowledge.
English language and literature.
Pure mathematics.
Applied mathematics.
Any modern language and literature.
Any other modern language and literature.
Latin.
English history.
Economics.
Outlines of English local government.
Elements of English law.
Experimental mechanics.
Experimental physics.
Chemistry.
Book-keeping and accountancy.

So far as the salary is concerned, the following figures will tell their own story: The pay for the beginner is £80 a year, increasing by rises of £5 to £100. After this the third-class clerks receive from £100 by yearly rises of £10 to £150. Second-class clerks start at the last sum and by rises of £12 10s. reach £200 a year. The first-class clerks rise from this to the maximum of £300.

A Merry Christmas to all Captainites!

Making an Opening

UNCLE JOHN had worked hard to bring in his favourite story. At last in desperation he stamped his foot, and shouted:—

"Hark, children! Was that a gun? Now, speaking of guns, that reminds me——"

The rest was plain sailing.

***

A Brilliant Recovery

A SCHOOL-TEACHER had given a lesson on patriotism, enlarging on the high notions which had moved the volunteers to leave their homes and fight for their country. The teacher noticed one boy who had paid no attention to the lesson, and as a test question he asked:—

"What motives took the volunteers to the war?"

The boy was taken by surprise, but recalling the "send-off" of the local reserves and volunteers at the railway station he replied:—

"Locomotives, sir."

The Vanished Hosts

"THIS," said the artist, "is a battle scene. Time, say the year 2000 A.D. The defending force is on the extreme right of the canvas."

"I can't see them," observed the friend.

"Certainly not; they are strongly entrenched."

"Can't see any entrenchments."

"Of course you can't. The entrenchments are skilfully concealed from view."

"I should think you'd show some big guns or something."

"Nonsense! The guns are disappearing guns, and they have disappeared."

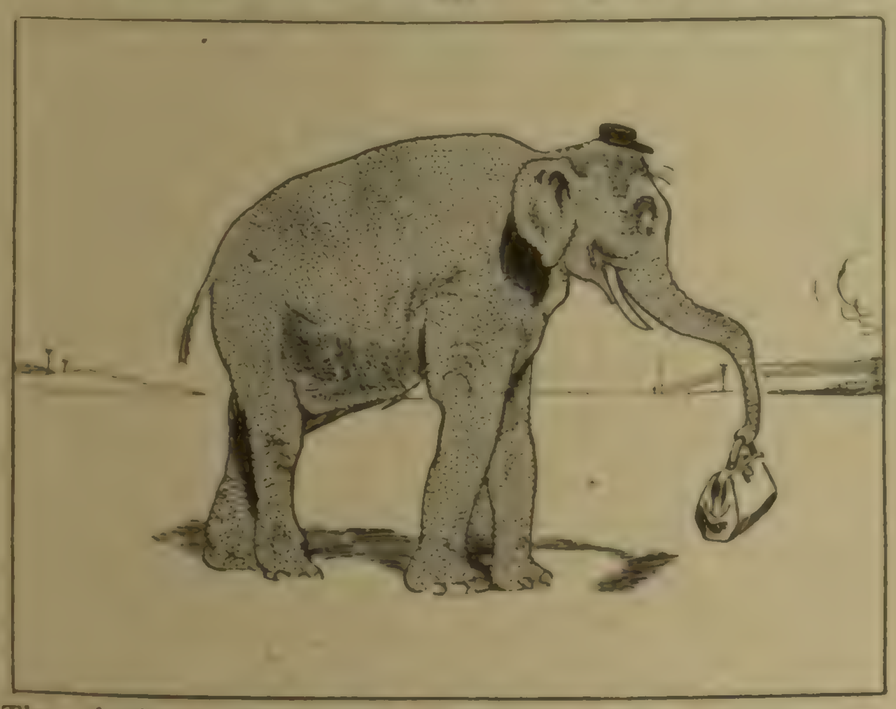
"Well, how about the attacking force?"

"Over here on the left—all under cover. You can't expect them to expose themselves to the spectator any more than to the enemy."

"Well, your picture is a mere landscape."

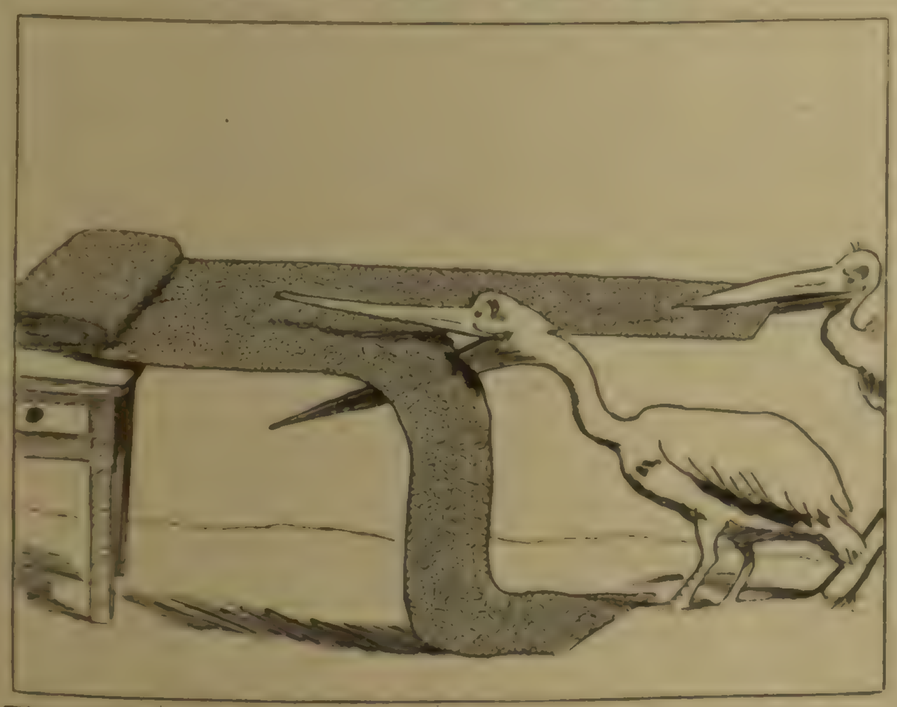
"Yes; but I take it that's how a battle will look in 2000."

PROFESSIONS IN THE ZOO



The elephant should be a railway porter, because he carries a trunk about with him.

The giraffe, of course, is a member of Parliament, because he's got neck enough for anything.



The storks and pelicans are tailors, because their bills are always too big.

And the zebra, from his costume, must be a professional footballer.

The three dauntless adventurers dropped into space. Whatever happened, whether they fell into the enemy's hands or not, they had by their heroic action gained a precious respite for their beloved airship.

The Terror of the Skies

A Thrilling Story of Adventure in Aerial Warfare

By PERCY F. WESTERMAN

I

ON the northern slope of the South Downs, just on the borders of Hampshire and Sussex, is situated an establishment officially known as H.M.S. *Hermes*.

To the uninitiated the presence of a naval station twelve miles from the coast seems at first to be perplexing—why the place should bear the name of an obsolete cruiser puzzles not a few.

Should the inquisitive stranger be able, by special permit, to pass within the triple fence of barbed wire, where vigilant marines keep ceaseless watch and ward, there would be nothing visible to the eye that might give an inkling of the true nature of the apparently derelict establishment.

A row of small cottages "painted" after the approved style that Jack ashore adopts—tar and whitewash—a moderately sized house standing well apart from the others, and a flagstaff from which a white ensign flutters in the breeze; a single-line railway terminating in a long corrugated iron structure; these comprise the outward and visible signs of H.M.S. *Hermes*—otherwise known as the School of Naval Aeronautics.

Nature has provided the escarpment of the downs with numerous blind defiles—as if she had intended to pierce the lofty ridge of chalk by means of a number of valleys, and had given up the work but half completed.

Modern man had taken Nature's work in hand, and adapted these depressions into "houses" for the airships of the British Navy.

A series of daring raids on the part of an active enemy had shown the impracticability of keeping the huge and unwieldy craft in sheds. The *Gadfly*, a 400ft. gasbag, had been destroyed in less than a minute by a well-directed bomb dropped by a hostile aviator within three miles of Spithead. At Turnchapel, near Plymouth, a naval airship shed and its contents were destroyed in a similar manner within a week of completion, while at Barking the army airship *Epsilon* had escaped destruction only by a blunder on the part of a monoplanist, who neatly dropped twenty pounds of high explosives upon a factory that in the twilight he had mistaken for the airship shed.

The airman who had made the mistake was compelled to descend shortly after dropping his missile, and, but for the timely arrival of a strong force of police, he would have been torn to pieces by the infuriated townspeople.

The result was that Great Britain issued an order threatening the death penalty upon all hostile airmen who did not confine themselves to reconnoitring; while her active enemy, the State of Competania, went a step further—all British airmen caught on or above Competanian territory were to be treated as spies.

True to their traditions that the greater the danger the greater the fun, the British naval airmen met the threat with equanimity. More airships were "laid down," monoplanes and biplanes increased in number with surprising rapidity, while steps were taken to safeguard the aerial fleet against a repetition of the raids in the earlier stages of the war.

Thus, in the case of H.M.S. *Hermes*, five enormous caverns were sunk into the chalk downs, each being 500ft. in length, 90ft. in height, and 50ft. in breadth, and lined with ferro-concrete.

Along the ridge of the downs, and extending for four miles on either side of the airship depot, were numerous gun-pits cunningly concealed from observation either from the ground or from the sky.

Each of the quick-firing guns fired a small detonating shell that, bursting with terrific force, would upset the equilibrium of any airmen within a hundred yards of the point of explosion, while the fragments of the missile would be so infinitesimal that no danger was likely to ensue upon their return to earth. Moreover, the explosion was accompanied by a brilliant light, that gave considerable aid to the powerful searchlight in locating a hostile prowler in the night.

At exactly a quarter to five on a dull November evening a train drew up at the siding of H.M.S. *Hermes*, and from it descended two

officers and nine men. They were all "feather-weights"—the Naval Airship Corps has no need of men too corpulent to pass through the hatchway of a third-class torpedo-boat—while even their thick fearnought suits did not mar the symmetry of their well-knit frames.

With the exception of the two officers none of the party knew the nature of their "commission." All they knew was that they had volunteered for a hazardous enterprise.

"Another twelve hours will see the business through," exclaimed Lieutenant O'Malley, gleefully.

"We've everything in our favour, I think, sir," replied Sub-Lieutenant Cameron, who shared his superior's enthusiasm. "I never thought we should have the luck to be detailed for this affair."

"The 'old man' wanted a lot of persuasion," replied O'Malley. "Sure, if it had not been for that set-to at Gosport to mettle him he would never have consented. So let's get under way before we have an 'annul.'"

O'Malley's orders were brief and explicit. He was to proceed at full speed to Eidensburg, the principal naval arsenal of Competania, do as much damage to the port and shipping as he possibly could, and then—well, there his orders ceased. It was left to him to take what steps he could to save H.M. Airship *Hornet* and her crew from capture and destruction.

Lieutenant O'Malley was, in naval parlance, an "outsider." Who he was, or who or what his parents were, none of his brother officers knew. Rumour had it that at one time of his career he was a chauffeur. It was, however, well known that he had a great reputation as an aviator, and possessed considerable skill in the management of air craft of all kinds. Great Britain had need of his services, and he was entered direct as a naval lieutenant of the Aeronautical Branch. It was merely following the precedent of the days of the Crimean War, when every available fitter and driver was entered the service as an engineer, and, in consequence, the step was unpopular with those officers who passed through Osborne and Dartmouth. Yet O'Malley was personally well liked. He was straightforward, good-natured, and reliable, though his contempt for the hard and fast regulations often led him into difficulties.

On the other hand Jack Cameron had entered the service as a cadet. He was immensely popular with his brother officers, excelling in sports of all kinds. Airmanship he took to as naturally as a duck takes to water, and after a short course at the Isle of Sheppey School he was appointed second in command to H.M. Airship *Hornet*.

The huge airship was already prepared for her voyage. Petrol, stores, and ammunition had been shipped, and all that remained was to haul her from her subterraneous shelter ere she could proceed upon her hazardous voyage.

Already fifty skilled and willing hands had begun their work, and as the little crew arrived at the entrance of the "garage" the bluff snout of the *Hornet* was emerging from its retreat.

In the dazzling glare of a dozen acetylene lamps, fixed at a safe distance from the gasbag, the airship seemed even more gigantic than she actually was.

The *Hornet* was the first of an entirely new rigid type. Her huge aluminium envelope, "armoured" with thin sheets of asbestos to prevent damage from the enemy's rockets, was sub-divided into fifty "ballonets."

Beneath the gasbag, and supported by hundreds of thin steel wire ropes, was a long, narrow platform extending nearly the whole length of the airship. On this platform were five compartments, the lower portion of each being made watertight to serve as floats should the huge craft have occasion to alight upon the surface of a calm sea.

Of these compartments the foremost was appropriated by the steering gear and ammunition for two of the six quick-firers. No. 2 cabin contained the bomb-dropping apparatus, ship's stores, and spare gear; No. 3 was the officers' quarters; No. 4 the men's; while the aftermost one contained the propelling machines, the petrol tanks being stowed between Nos. 4 and 5 cabins.

At convenient distances five quick-firing guns were placed, so mounted that they could fire in almost any direction, save at an object overhead.

To counteract this disadvantage an aluminium tube 3ft. in diameter passed vertically through the midship section of the gasbag. This tube was provided with rungs, thus forming a direct means of communication between the car and the upper part of the envelope, which for a space of 20ft. by 6ft. was strengthened to form a platform, on which was mounted a quick-firer similar to those below.

Accompanied by Sub-Lieutenant Cameron, O'Malley made a tour of inspection of the airship as it lay at rest, then, having satisfied himself that all was in order, he gave the command "All aboard!"

Eagerly the crew swung themselves upon the car, each man carrying his scanty belongings in a canvas bag. The two artificers directed their attention to the motors; while the quartermaster, after a squint at the compass from sheer force of habit, gave a few turns to the wheels that controlled the elevating and steering planes.

"All correct, sir!"

"Very good. Cast off there till she's lively. Mr. Cameron, you will please get on board."

O'Malley waited beside the car, counting the number of bags of ballast that were being released ere the airship should show a tendency to rise.

Suddenly, with an erratic movement so peculiar to craft of this description, the afterpart of the *Hornet* reared herself a good 10ft. in the air, and an iron hook trailing from the *nacelle* caught the lieutenant neatly under the chin, and lifted him a good 4ft. from the ground.

A warning shout from the assistants brought the lively part to earth, but the mischief was already done. Lieutenant O'Malley, half stunned, was bleeding from a nasty gash in his throat.

The unfortunate officer was carried into an adjoining casualty room, where a naval surgeon applied himself to the task of sewing up the injury. During the operation O'Malley recovered his senses.

"What have you brought me here for, Mr. Anstruther?" he asked, anxiously. "Hang it all, man, it's nothing! Let me go aboard!"

"You're not in a fit state to go, Mr. O'Malley," replied the surgeon, gravely.

"Not in a fit state? Of course I am! Here Cameron, bear a hand—I'm off!"

"You will remain here, sir," exclaimed the medico, sternly. "I order you."

"You are not my superior officer."

"In this case I am. I must refer you to paragraph 445 of the King's regulations."

"Paragraph 445 be hanged!" retorted O'Malley, with a fine disregard for what he termed red tape. "Look here, Anstruther, if you keep me here people will say I funked the job." And staggering to his feet O'Malley made for the door, only to fall into the arms of his sub-lieutenant.

"No one will ever say that of O'Malley," remarked the doctor.

A deafening crash of shattered steel told that the bomb had done its work, destroying the enemy's giant cruiser.

"Sure, is that so?" replied the lieutenant, gratefully. "Then I suppose I must knuckle under."

"We'll wire for another 'luff' to take command," continued the surgeon.

"No, you won't!" exclaimed O'Malley, fiercely. "Ten to one the admiral will cry off the whole thing. Cameron, my boy, you'll take command. Be off as sharp as you can; you're twenty minutes late already."

"I will, sir," replied the sub.

"One moment! You know your orders? Good! Now, for the honour of the service, and your own credit, make a good fist of it. Good-bye and good luck."

Ten minutes later H.M. Airship *Hornet*, with Sub-Lieutenant Cameron in command, rose majestically from the ground, and soared swiftly in the darkness, bound for the hostile port of Eidensburg.

II

TWELVE hours had elapsed since the *Hornet* started on her desperate enterprise. Flying high and steering entirely by compass, the airship had lost sight of everything.

Beneath, a thick fog hid the surface of the sea, on which neither lights were visible, nor were the sirens of the cautiously moving shipping audible. For the latter there was good reason. Merchant vessels had been driven from off that part of the globe, and only sinister grey battleships, cruisers, and torpedo craft steamed silently and aggressively, with screened navigation lights. Once or twice Cameron picked up a "wireless" from a patrolling cruiser that served to confirm his course, and to fix his approximate position, but beyond that there was no communication with the outside world—only the sinister silence of the air.

On nearing the coast of Competania the *Hornet* encountered a blizzard. Though travelling in the same direction as the storm the effect was none the less uncomfortable, for in a few minutes the car was covered with a coating of ice, while every wire was festooned with glistening icicles. Under the weight of the frozen water, and the contraction of the hydrogen by the sudden fall of the temperature, the *Hornet* sank several hundred feet, till 5cwt. of precious ballast had to be sacrificed to aid the action of the elevating planes.

"We're over something, I think, sir," remarked the quartermaster, as Cameron, shivering in spite of his warm clothing, joined him in the steering-room. "I fancy I heard a bell ringing."

"Then turn her head to wind; we'll drop till we can see the lay of the land."

As Cameron spoke the dull rumble of a train became audible, while through the rapidly dispersing mirk a dull, red trail appeared to crawl leisurely through the darkness.

Presently, with her propellers running at quarter speed, the *Hornet* descended to within 50ft. of the ground. The force of the wind then became apparent, for, although forging dead to windward, the airship was borne stern foremost with great rapidity.

"This won't do," thought the sub. "We might barge into a steeple or something equally unpleasant." And, seizing the voice-tubes, he successively ordered a sharp look-out to be kept astern, and the elevating planes to be brought into action.

"We are passing over a forest, I think, sir," observed the quartermaster.

"So much the better. Let her drive stern foremost till we find a suitable clearing, then drop to leeward."

In ten minutes the desired shelter was found, and, screened from the wind by a clump of trees over 100ft. in height, the *Hornet* sank gracefully till her platform was within 30ft. of the ground.

"Who goes there?" came the sudden challenge.

Above the moaning of the wind a gruff voice hailed from below, and Jack caught sight of the dim outline of a grey-coated, spike-helmeted sentry, holding rifle and bayonet at the "ready."

Fortunately the crew of the airship were too astonished to hail in their mother tongue. Cameron, who was an expert linguist, and had perfect command of the Competanian language, leant over the rail.

"The imperial airship *Carl Stalgratz*," he replied. "We are out of our bearings. In which direction does Eidensburg lie?"

"Twelve *mijles* to the north-east, Herr Captain," replied the man.

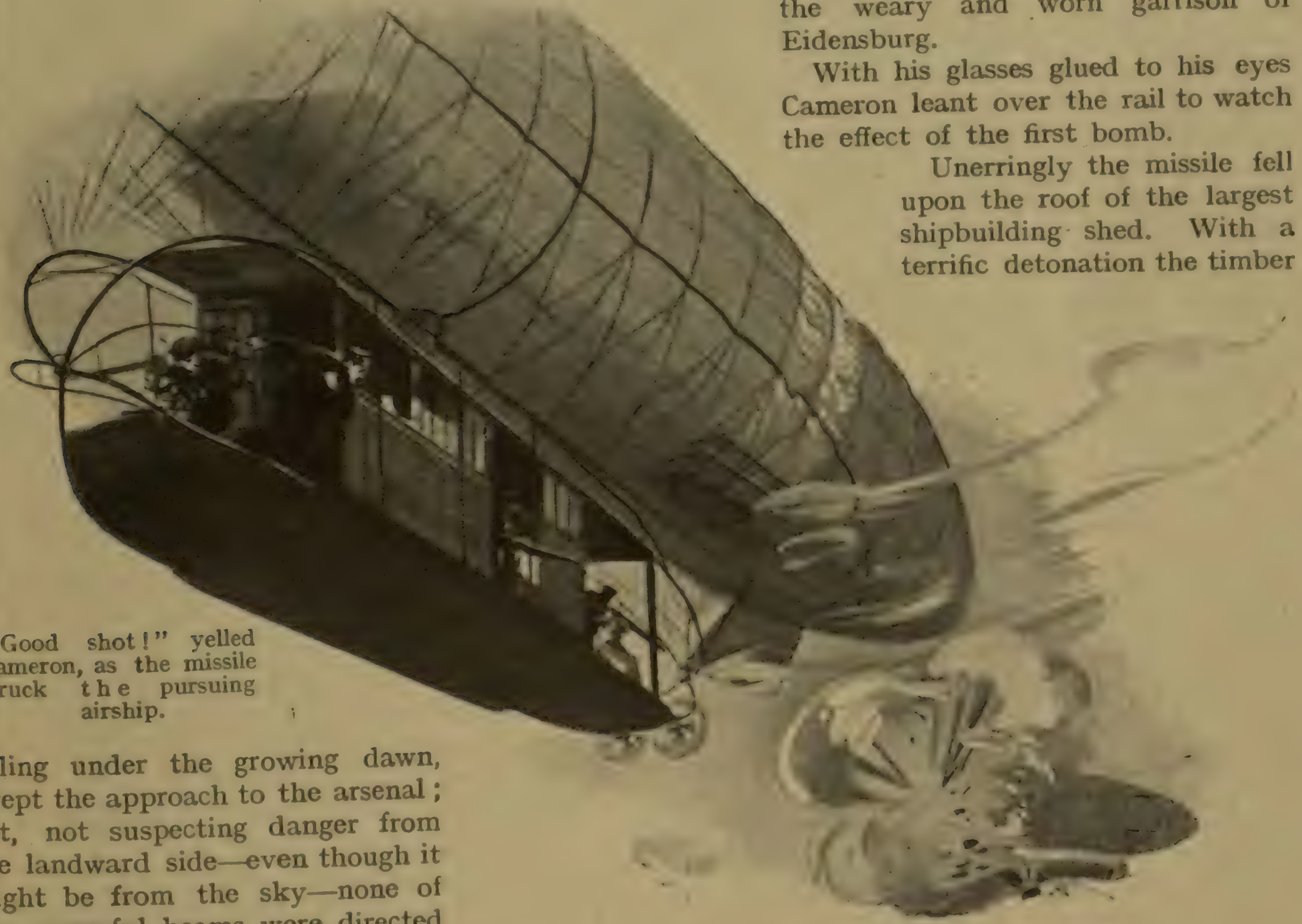
This information was enough. Whispering through the voice-tube Cameron ordered some of the water ballast to be started, and the *Hornet* instantly shot vertically upwards to a distance of 500ft.

Dawn was just breaking as the British airship, cleared for action, came in sight of the naval arsenal of Eidensburg.

The pale, grey light glinted upon the glass chequers on the roofs of the gigantic covered slips where the two Competanian super-Dread-

noughts were in a forward state of completion. To the westward lay the huge floating dock, where the giant cruiser, *Splanitz*—badly mauled in the action off the Dogger, was being patched up to take her place once more in the line of battle. To the eastward the tidal basin, crowded with torpedo-boats, destroyers, submarines, was partially hidden by the damp mist that drifted like smoke from the reeking mud-banks of the Swartsee.

Seaward an irregular line of searchlights,



"Good shot!" yelled Cameron, as the missile struck the pursuing airship.

paling under the growing dawn, swept the approach to the arsenal; yet, not suspecting danger from the landward side—even though it might be from the sky—none of the powerful beams were directed towards the slowly moving *Hornet*.

Slowly moving? With her ten cylinders developing 250 horse-power each at 1,200 revolutions per minute, the airship could barely hold her own against the gale that blew from the shores of Old England.

Cameron knew that with the reserve of petrol at his command it would be impossible to return against that howling wind. That troubled him but slightly; he was on the spot. Beneath him lay the arsenal of Eidensburg, practically at his mercy. Now was his opportunity—let the future take care of itself.

"Aloft there?" shouted the sub, through the voice-tube communicating with the upper platform. "Are there any signs of the enemy's air-craft?"

"No, sir."

"Thank goodness for that!" ejaculated Cameron fervently, then, slightly depressing the *Hornet's* planes to counteract the weight of the released projectiles, he gave orders for the bomb-dropping gear to be brought into action.

The *Hornet* was still about 800ft. above the doomed arsenal, sufficient to prevent the whirring of her propellers to be heard above the howling of the gale by the weary and worn garrison of Eidensburg.

With his glasses glued to his eyes Cameron leant over the rail to watch the effect of the first bomb.

Unerringly the missile fell upon the roof of the largest shipbuilding shed. With a terrific detonation the timber and gear seemed to vanish, while a deafening crash of shattered steel showed that the high explosive had done its work against the giant cruiser *Valkyrie*.

Ten seconds later the adjoining shed with its contents shared the same fate, while the shattered woodwork burst into a fierce flame.

As for the floating dock, one side crumpled up as if made of brown paper. The whole structure took a heavy list, and the *Splanitz*, snapping her shoring timbers like match-sticks, fell broadside on to the already irreparably damaged dock, involving it and herself in a common fate

Spellbound, Cameron watched the work of destruction till the shrill screech of a one-pounder shell whizzing past the airship recalled him to the necessity for defence.

Even with the knowledge that twenty tons of high explosive substances still remained on the airship, and that a single well-directed shell would blow the *Hornet* into infinitesimal particles, the sub-lieutenant's coolness did not desert him.

Ordering the elevating planes to be thrust hard up, and a quantity of water ballast to be dropped, Cameron brought the *Hornet* immediately over the battery from whence the projectile came. He knew full well that the anti-airship armament could not be trained in a perfectly vertical direction, and until the other forts joined in the fusillade he had a few moments' respite.

Ere the British airship was brought into this position she had found time to account for numbers of the small craft in the tidal basin. Then the other batteries joined in the firing, and to avoid them Cameron ascended still higher, but not before a projectile pierced two of the ballonets of the envelope.

Luckily the resistance offered by the aluminium skin was so slight that the impact was insufficient to cause the detonator to explode, yet the damage was serious enough; the last of the water ballast had to be started to allow the *Hornet* to continue her soaring flight. In addition she dropped her last bomb.

Cameron now had time to consider his position. He had carried out his instructions to the letter; it now remained for him to save his craft and her crew if humanly possible. But how? It was hopeless to attempt to make a seven-hundred-mile flight against the gale. To surrender never entered his head—apart from the ignominy, an inglorious death at the hands of the infuriated enemy awaited him and his men.

The shrill whistle of one of the voice-tubes distracted the sub-lieutenant's attention from his perplexing problem. Applying the instrument to his ears Cameron received the startling message: "Four of the enemy's airships to windward of us, sir!"

III

THE situation was indeed desperate. In addition to the *Hornet* being handicapped by the damage to two of her ballonets, and the adverse wind that made a direct return voyage an impossibility, four of the Competanian dirigibles had gained the "weather-gauge"—an advantage never so much appreciated since the days of the old "wooden walls."

Under ordinary circumstances none of the enemy's airships could touch the Hornet in point of speed. Moreover, they themselves were propelled by engines of varying horse-power. But with the damage already sustained the British dirigible might be overhauled by the *Voss*—for Cameron recognised in the huge yellow-skinned, bull-nosed airship the crack Competanian "sky-cruiser."

Although formidable the Competanian dirigibles were not so much to be feared as were the aeroplanes—scores of mosquito-like craft, each carrying pilot and engineer. A part of the latter's duty was to man the Deidrich quick-firing gun—a light weapon firing a .775in. shell, possessing sufficient bursting charge to totally disable any airship afloat.

Cameron gave a swift glance in the direction of the intercepting airships, now trailing out in order to cover as much "ground" as possible. His mind was made up, and with a curious ring of exultation in his voice, he turned to the quartermaster:—

"Hard over with your helm, Jenkins; then steer due east."

This order was instantly obeyed; the quartermaster showed no outward sign of surprise, not even when the sub-lieutenant added:—

"We can't go back, and I'm hanged if I'll let the beggars nab us! I mean to let her go full tilt before the wind, and descend on the neutral territory of Anitania."

Jenkins's notion of European geography was very hazy; but he knew this much—a voyage of nearly seven hundred miles across Competania had to be accomplished ere a haven of refuge could be obtained.

The screech of a shell caused Cameron to lean over the rail and watch the course of the projectile. Fully a quarter of a mile beyond, and far below the *Hornet* the shell burst with a muffled detonation.

"A six-centimetre firing shell with time fuses," grunted the sub, then, turning to one of the crew, he added, "Pass the word aft for our people to make them stop that game."

And stop that game the gun-layer at the after one-pounder did, for his first shot struck the unfortunate *Voss* fairly in the centre of her snub-nosed bow. It was like the explosion of an enormous inflated paper bag—utter annihilation.

Staggering along the slippery platform Cameron reached the part where the two guns were mounted. "Overboard with them!" he shouted, "and all the armourers' tools—everything!"

"Good shot!" yelled Cameron, enthusiastically, carried away with the heat of the battle.

But the rest of the hostile dirigibles showed more caution. Realising the folly of being made the victims of the British airship's tactics they hung back well in line, content to follow the fugitive at a considerably lower rate of speed.

It was now broad daylight. By the aid of the glasses the crew of the *Hornet* could see the leafless trees of the vast Competanian forests bending beneath the vicious blast, as the airship swept high above the ground with a velocity of ninety miles per hour.

"Keep a bright look-out for'ard," cautioned the sub. "They've set the telegraph working, and we shall have another dust-up ere long."

Cameron was right, for before the *Hornet* passed over the important military station of Karlstadt five specks in the sky denoted the presence of the enemy's aeroplanes.

"We must rise above them," he shouted. "Elevate the forward planes."

"All the ballast has been started, sir," the quartermaster ventured to remark.

"Then something else must go," replied his superior.

The aeroplanes were now plainly visible. Magnificently handled in spite of the gale, they soared gracefully upwards, dipping at intervals as an erratic squall struck their flimsy planes.

Swiftly the *Hornet* ascended, yet it was soon evident that the nearmost biplane was out-stripping her in the upward race.

In the midst of her spiral-like ascent the biplane found an opportunity of letting fly with her quick-firer, and amid a shower of splinters the after-starboard propeller of the *Hornet* was shattered into smithereens.

But the *Hornet* had her revenge. The for'ard quick-firer again barked, and with the explosion of the projectile the hostile aeroplane swayed ominously. Then, apparently uninjured, she tilted more and more, till with a dreadful swoop she plunged earthwards, her unfortunate crew striking the earth a good half minute before her frail framework was smashed to splinters upon the ground.

Staggering along the slippery platform Cameron reached the part where the two amidships quick-firing guns were mounted.

"Overboard with them; then throw out all the armourers' tools—everything we can do without," he shouted.

Relieved of the weight of nearly a quarter of a ton of metal the *Hornet* leapt upwards till in the rarefied air breathing became oppressive, and the glittering icicles that outlined her framework visibly increased in length.

The British dirigible had outdistanced the aeroplanes, but a fresh danger confronted her. The outward pressure of gas in the ballonets, being greater than the pressure of the air, threatened to rend the aluminium envelope asunder.

"We must take the risk," muttered the sub grimly. Yet he forbore to mention the danger to his men, who, chilled to the bone, took advantage of the slight shelter afforded by the boat-like cabins.

Suddenly the port engines, that had hitherto been running without a hitch, snorted once or twice, then came to an abrupt standstill. White-faced, one of the artificer-engineers came aft.

"Petrol's frozen in the tanks, sir," he reported.

Helpless and at the mercy of the winds, the huge, unwieldy gasbag being borne onwards at a height of 6,000ft. above the ground—but whither?

The earth was now totally invisible, and it was impossible to discover in what direction the derelict was travelling. Cameron could only hope that the wind had neither veered nor backed.

The short November day at length gave place to night, and still the flight was maintained. A careful examination of the barometer showed that the *Hornet* was falling.

Shortly after midnight two more of the quick-firers were jettisoned, and the downward movement was temporarily averted.

All that could be done was to wait for daylight, and to trust that the vast country of Competania had been traversed.

Again the downward tendency was checked by the sacrifice of the two remaining guns and the ammunition. The sub-lieutenant had taken every precaution against wanton damage. The primers had been removed from the shells, while he fervently trusted that the unusual ballast would fall clear of life or private property.

At length everything that it was possible to get rid of had been thrown overboard. It wanted an hour to daylight.

Cameron was snatching a hasty repast, when a knock at his cabin door caused him to exclaim "Come in!"

In answer to the invitation the door was opened, and three of the Hornet's crew—one of the artificers and two of the seamen-gunners—entered.

"Beg pardon, sir," began the knight of the spanner, "but we've thought of a plan to save the old hooker from coming to earth."

"Well?" demanded Cameron, sharply, in his anxiety.

"We three want to drop overboard, sir."

"Good gracious, men, it would mean certain death if you were captured! No, no; we must sink or swim together."

"Trust us to worm out of this mess all right, sir," continued the spokesman. "We've a good 300ft. drop, and once we reach ground safely we'll do our best to make our way to the frontier—it can't be many miles off. Besides, if anything goes wrong with us we'll have the satisfaction of knowing we've done our dooty, and saved the old *Hornet*."

"Well, go then, and good luck to you all," replied Cameron, holding out his hand. "If we come out of this affair you won't be forgotten."

Eagerly the three desperate men hastened to put their plan into execution. Stowed away in the store-room were a dozen of the latest type of life-saving parachutes.

Each of the men selected one of these appliances, and having been lashed into the aluminium cradle—for their hands were too numbed to retain their hold—they were carefully lowered till the top of the parachute was level with the platform of the car.

Almost reluctantly, for it seemed like sending their comrades to certain death, the rest of the crew cast off the securing hitches one by one, and silently the three dauntless adventurers dropped into space.

Alive or dead they had gained more than an hour's precious respite for the disabled *Hornet*, as with a bound the airship shot upwards for nearly 1,000ft.

Slowly the hour passed as the worn and anxious crew awaited the dawn.

When at length the first streak of grey glimmered in the east a cry of surprise broke from the lips of the sub-lieutenant.

During the night the wind had veered completely round, and unconsciously the airship was being carried westward towards that part

of the country from which the crew hoped to have escaped.

"*That's* done it!" ejaculated Cameron. "We're descending, and the sooner the better. Fate is fighting against us." Then, raising his voice, he gave orders for the bow grapnels to be got ready.

Lower and lower sank the *Hornet*, till in the growing light the snow-clad country beneath them could be distinguished.

Southward flowed a broad river, crossed by a bridge of boats. On the eastern side of the bridge stood a sentry-box painted with the black and yellow diagonal stripes that were Anitania's distinguishing colours, while on the other side was a guard-house decorated with the red and white stripes of Competania.

The *Hornet* had gained neutral territory, *but was being borne back into hostile ground.*

Already the airship had been "spotted" from below, and on one side of the river green-coated soldiers were gazing upwards in wonder and interest, while on the Competania side videttes were galloping up and down ready to fire their carbines the moment the *Hornet* crossed the boundary.

Down and down sank the *Hornet*, drawing nearer and nearer the dividing line. She was now barely .500ft. above the ground, or 1ooft. more than the length of her grapnel line.

"Hard lines!" muttered Cameron, clenching his fists in his impotence.

Then—wonder of wonders—the earth seemed to stand still beneath them for a few moments, and after a breathless suspense the airship again began to retrace her course. In descending she had entered another stratum of air, and the current was bearing her back into neutral territory.

Ten minutes later the *Hornet* came to earth two miles inside the boundary—safe, but fated to be kept useless till the termination of the war.

Shortly after his descent Jack Cameron learnt that his three devoted men had alighted safely in the barrack square of Postoff, thirty miles on the right side of the frontier, while before nightfall he received a telegraphic communication from the Admiralty acknowledging with the highest expressions of praise the receipt of the report of the *Hornet's* commander.

This, to a certain extent, atoned for Cameron's enforced detention in a neutral country, but ere peace was declared he was sub-lieutenant no longer, but Lieutenant John Cameron, D.S.O. —especially promoted for gallantry on particular service.

Brown Pink, the artist, cannot afford a Christmas fire, so he paints one, and with a little imagination manages to keep warm.

BLACK EVANS

By R. S. Warren Bell.

Author of "Tales of Greyhouse," "J. O. Jones," etc.

Synopsis.

A NEW head master, the Rev. E. H. Talbot, is appointed to Christ's College, Abbotsleigh, and with him he brings forty scholars from the private school which he formerly governed at Pageways. Though there is no open warfare this intrusion is deeply resented by the boys of Christ's College, particularly by Fewlass Evans ("Black Evans"), a wild, lawless Fifth Former of seventeen years, renowned for his strength and his excellence at Rugby football. Evans has already come into verbal conflict with a senior from Pageways named Norman, and he has also drawn to himself the unfavourable notice of the new head master.

During a game of Rugby football Black Evans collars a "Pagan" forward so roughly that he breaks his collar-bone. The new head master then announces that the school in future will play Association instead of Rugby football. Evans is "gated," and he spends his leisure time in writing what he calls a novel, entitled "Talbot the Tyrant," in which occur many uncomplimentary references to the head master. This work he shows to his friend Verrey, who advises him to be very careful that no one else sees it.

It is the custom for the captain of football to be elected by the three top forms, and this year three candidates are nominated for the position, namely, Norman, the Pagan senior; Colebrook, head prefect of Christ's; and Black Evans. The voting has taken place, and the whole school is waiting outside the library, or wandering fitfully about the corridors, awaiting the appearance of the scrutineers. Who has won—Christian or Pagan? And, if Christian, which Christian?

CHAPTER X.—(*Continued.*)

TALBOT THE TYRANT

A BABEL of tongues filled the air. Even now the merits of the rivals were being proclaimed and challenged. Even now a swirling movement here and there in the serried mass of boys evinced that a verbal duel had ended in a physical one.

The excitement was contagious. King, the Head's butler, was to be seen in the distance, the towering, lean-visaged Corporal Freeman keeping him company.

Only a few very important and a few very unimportant persons were absent. Of the former, Colebrook and Norman were promenading the upper field in company, while Evans was writing his lines in the Lower Fifth room; the latter were a few new boys, only too glad to be able to enjoy themselves in their own very juvenile way for a brief period. Too soon the larger mammals that preyed upon them would be seeking entertainment at their expense. But for the present, however, these children were free to gambol, having no cause to fear interruption from the two great men of the Sixth who passed and repassed them without seeming to be aware of their existence.

At last! The babel ceased; in a moment the word had gone round that the library door was open. All surged forward, listening intently. The masters ceased to chat, and the two men-servants to gossip.

When there was absolute silence, Beach,

the senior of the two scrutineers, put an end to the general suspense.

"The election for football captain," he said, speaking in a clear, collected voice that reached everyone, "has resulted as follows: Evans, 21——"

A yell of triumph went up from the Evansites which reached Colebrook and Norman in the upper field and sent the new boys scurrying like a covey of frightened partridges to a remoter play-ground.

"Colebrook, 20; Norman, 20," concluded Beach.

"By one vote!" The school gasped.

"Recount!" shouted a Pagan.

"We have counted the votes three times," said Beach. "The figures are as I have stated."

Pushing his way through the crowd, he fixed the paper on which he had written the result to the games board, which was immediately surrounded by a gaping throng. Others made a rush for the Lower Fifth room to inform the new captain of his success.

"You've won, Fewlass!" shrieked Carson.

"Wales for ever! By one vote!" added Dawson. And feeling that the occasion excused the liberty he was taking, he slapped the hero of the day on the back.

"Speech!" boomed a fellow by the door, hands to mouth.

"Chair him!"

"Speech!"

"Hurrah for Black Evans!"

"Speech!"

"Get up, Fewlass! Say something!" urged Carson.

"Acknowledge our services!" added Dawson with a grin.

Evans rose.

"Thank you, indeed!" he said, simply, and sat down in a hurry.

So with a hurricane of cheering the Evansites left their hero to pursue the task that hardly reflected credit on a captain of football. As for Evans, he sat staring at the Greek characters on the page before him. He was wondering what "Talbot the Tyrant" would have to say about it all.

CHAPTER XI

CAPTAIN EVANS

THE head master, however, when informed by Colebrook of the result of the election, raised no opposition to the chosen of the school.

"Thank you, Colebrook. I am content to leave the matter entirely in the hands of the seniors. It is the school custom, and a very good custom too, for the seniors to elect the captains of games, and I have no wish to interfere with it. It is a little unfortunate," he added somewhat grimly, "that Evans will not, for the moment, be able to take up the captaincy—in an active sense, that is. I have arranged a match for Saturday. Mr. Malling, who has an Army coaching establishment at Stacey Bois, is bringing a team over. A number of his pupils play Rugby, so he can only bring over nine men. We must, therefore, lend him two. You or Norman had better act as deputy captain for that occasion, unless Evans has his lines done by then."

Colebrook went straight to Evans.

"Got those lines done, old chap?"

Evans looked at the page in front of him, and did a rapid multiplication table with his fingers.

"One hundred and seventy-three and a half, to be exact," he replied. "Wait a bit." And he rapidly finished off the line with his square, heavy Greek characters. "There! One hundred and seventy-four."

Colebrook smiled. He was thinking it was a good thing ink was so plentiful at the school.

"Then, so far, you are three hundred and twenty-six lines off playing against Malling's."

"Eh?"

"You can't captain the school against Malling's unless you've got your lines done," said Colebrook."

"Good job," growled Evans. "I'd as soon write lines as play that footling game."

Colebrook sat down and looked squarely at his brother Christian.

"Look here, Evans, don't you think you'd better stop fooling about now you're going to skipper the school. Hang it, man, you're not a kid now! Besides, think what a chance it gives these Pagan fellows to sneer at us when the captain of footer can't play in a match because he's doing lines!"

"Only a few more months shall roll before I leave," said Evans briskly, "so let me live my life."

Colebrook got up. "What about the side for Wednesday?"

"Oh, you and Norman can settle that."

"Malling's will want two men. They can only bring nine."

"Lend them Carson and Dawson," said Evans. "They'll be a great help to our side."

"It's a pity you're going to be skipper if you can't take the thing seriously," said Colebrook shortly, as he went out. For alas! well-meaning and upright as he was, the captain of the school had little sense of humour, and was quite unable to plumb the deep wells of it possessed by this strange Cambrian.

The match with Malling's being denied to him, Evans felt that he could take his time over his lines. He hoped to play in the next match, whatever that might be, and was looking forward with no little satisfaction to skippering the school. His contempt for the game was only assumed. He knew Soccer to be a good game, well worth the playing, and he had the sense to see that the sooner he settled down to it the better. However, there would be ample time in which to finish his lines before the next match, he told himself—ample time. On the day of his interview with Colebrook he finished off the second hundred. Then, by way of relaxation, he added a chapter to his novel, "Talbot the Tyrant."

On the night before the match, having got permission to work late, he was steadily forging through his third hundred when Norman came into the Lower Fifth room.

"Evans," he said getting to the point at once, "what about the chaps we're going to lend Malling's?"

"Carson and Dawson," said Evans, his head bent over his task.

"My good man, it's ridiculous. What will Malling's think?"

"That we must have a good team to be able to spare two men like that."

Norman did not seem amused.

"Playing the fool like this won't do the school any good," he remarked.

"I don't want to do the school any good," rejoined Evans simply.

Norman stared at him in silence for a moment, then turned on his heel and departed. After all, Evans was captain, and his word was law.

Arrived in his dormitory some time after lights out, Evans made known the intended honour.

"Carson!"

"Hullo, squire!"

"Dawson!"

"Sir, to you!"

"I'm lending you two to Malling's to-morrow."

"Steady on, Fewlass!" exclaimed Carson hastily.

"We can't play the beastly game!" remonstrated Dawson.

"No, you've got to learn it," replied Evans.

The chums conferred together in whispers while Evans undressed.

"There are heaps of fellows better than us," pleaded Carson as Evans got into bed.

"Loads!" added Dawson. "Payne, Beauchamp, Burgoyne, Morse, Verrey——"

"Starr, Rufford, Havelock, Cope——" chimed in Carson.

"O'Neil, Waters, Mead, Stephens," said Dawson, concluding the list.

No answer came from Evans.

"We can't play for toffee," declared Carson.

"We shall muck up the whole game," whined Dawson.

Evans was mute.

"Besides," added Carson, after thinking hard, "we're kept in."

They waited a long time for Evans to answer, but no word came.

"Percy Carson!" breathed Dawson at length.

"Yes, Harry?"

"He's asleep," said Dawson.

"No, he isn't," said Evans, sitting up. "Go to sleep, you talking bullfinches. You've got to play for Malling's, and that's the end of it."

And that was the end of it, and that looked at first like being the end of Malling's, for Carson and Dawson, though they played up valiantly, spoilt many nice movements, and at half-time, though Malling's had kept Christ's out, they had not scored themselves. However, as Malling's was composed largely of fellows from Winterhouse, Pillvern, and Tewsbury, the cramming establishment, in spite of the handicap imposed on it by the men loaned, in the end beat the school easily enough by three goals to nil. Apart from the fact that Dawson nearly put through his own goal, Christ's never looked like scoring. Evans, indeed, earned a reputation for wisdom by insisting that these two should be the ones "lent." "For if we'd lent them two fellows who knew the game," observed Norman to Colebrook after the match, "they'd have whacked us by twelve to nil."

"Of course, you are just settling down to a new code," said Malling's skipper comfortingly to Colebrook as they sat at tea after the match. "It will take your fellows quite a season to adapt themselves to Soccer."

"But our team was nearly all Pageways," replied Colebrook ruefully.

"Private school, you know," said the Malling's man with significance. "Pity you didn't stick to Rugger. You had a name for that."

Colebrook shrugged his shoulders. The outlook was not rosy. Devoutly he prayed that he might win the Cambridge scholarship he was entering for in December. To win a scholarship was his only chance of going to the 'Varsity, and he had no desire now to stay at Christ's a term longer than was necessary.

And on the top of this defeat by the scratch Malling's side, came a thunderbolt in the shape of a date from Pulborough. It was a fact. Pulborough, the mighty Pulborough, had been let down by some other school, and (thanks to the fact that Mr. Talbot and their own Head had rowed in the same college boat) had consented to meet Christ's, on Christ's ground, on the second Saturday in October.

CHAPTER XII

EVANS SHOWS UP HIS LINES

IT is the practice of most head masters periodically to act as *locum tenens* to a form master. It is a wholesome custom, for in this way the Head gets into touch with the boys, and he also obtains useful knowledge of a form's "form."

Evans, having at last finished his lines, was wondering on Monday morning when he had better hand them up, for he was not a person who went out of his way to force himself on the notice of the authorities, when, about five minutes after the commencement of morning school, Mr. Talbot entered the Lower Fifth classroom. The form master, Mr. Kearton, immediately rose from his seat, and a sudden hush prevailed.

"If you will allow me," said the head master in a low tone to his colleague, "I should like to take the form during this lesson. Will you kindly deputise for me in the Sixth Form classroom? I have set the Sixth a paper on Roman history, so all you will have to do will be to sit with them."

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Kearton, glad of the respite, but a little apprehensive as to the result of the Head's survey of his class.

So Mr. Kearton went off to the Sixth Form room, where he found the Sixth engrossed in their Roman history paper. As became a form composed for the most part of prefects, perfect order prevailed, so Mr. Kearton's task was an easy one. All he had to do, indeed, was to sit at the master's desk and answer an occasional query concerning some abstruse point in the paper.

The Lower Fifth meanwhile, was trembling in its shoes. The subject of the first forty minutes was Latin prose. Normally the form would settle down and do this for the first half-hour, and during the last quarter of an hour it would be corrected. The order would come, "Change books!" the form-master would write the correct Latin on the board, and each boy would correct his neighbour's exercise. The boy with the fewest mistakes would then go top, and the class would be numbered off. Thus every lesson presented healthy competition and provoked keen rivalry.

The Lower Fifth just now was engaged on the study of the genitive case, for Mr. Kearton was taking it rapidly through the syntax just to see "how it went."

"I see you are doing Exercise 282," said the Head. "You will be allowed twenty minutes in which to complete it. I shall then give you the translations, and afterwards ask you a few general questions."

The Lower Fifth thereupon fell to work with great diligence, and for twenty minutes the silence was broken only by the steady scratching of pens and the heavy breathing of those engaged on this arduous toil.

It is probable that owing to the importance of the occasion each boy did a rather worse exercise than he would have done under ordinary circumstances.

While they wrote the Head busied himself correcting some Greek proses he had brought with him.

The time allowance having elapsed, the order came "Change books," and the Head wrote the Latin of the sentences on the blackboard. When the class arranged itself in order of merit, Verrey, to his surprise, found himself sixth, and the head master beamed upon him. It was gratifying to find a boy who had not been noted for diligence at Pageways doing sc much better in his new school.

"I am pleased to see that you have acquitted yourself so well, Verrey," said Mr. Talbot. "I hope you will go on as you have begun."

Black Evans, with twenty-one mistakes, was quite at the bottom of the class. Twenty-one mistakes in an exercise of ten sentences meant that he had made an average of two blunders in every sentence, which was almost as many as he could make.

"Now, if you will line up," said the head master, "we will have a short *viva voce*."

With a nervous shuffling the Lower Fifth ranged itself from window to door.

"The boy who is at the bottom of the class," commenced the Head, "tell me, please, what is the Latin for 'He is a man of ability.' The boy at the bottom of the class," continued Mr. Talbot, with a curl of the lip, "must not, of course, imagine that I am paying him a compliment."

The class smirked tremulously. When a head master wishes to be regarded as a wit it is wise to humour him.

"Oh, you are at the bottom, Evans," went on the head master. "Will you oblige us? 'He is a man of ability.'"

"*Est*," began Evans uncomfortably, "*homo*—"

The head master pursed up his lips. "'*Est homo*,'" he said sarcastically. "Proceed, Evans."

But Evans couldn't for the life of him remember the Latin for "ability," although this very word was translated for him in the notes on the morning's lesson.

"Top boy!"

The top boy hesitated.

"Next," said the Head.

Verrey was already clicking his fingers.

"Please, sir," he said, as the Head reached him, "*Vir est magni ingenii*."

"Correct," said the Head. "Go up top, Verrey."

Verrey was blushing with pride as he assumed the place of giddy altitude referred to.

"'*Est homo*,'" repeated the Head, glancing at Evans. "Evidently the Lower Fifth possess a classical scholar of remarkable erudition. '*Homo*,' boy," he went on, "is not the right word in this instance."

Evans merely scowled.

"Let me try you, Evans, with something a little simpler. We will revert to the history of the celebrated Balbus, the wall-builder. Come, tell us, Evans, the Latin for 'Balbus has a book.'"

This seemed simple enough to Evans, who gruffly replied, "*Balbus habet librum*."

"Come, come, Evans," cried the Head, "can you not put it in a more literary way?"

Evans thought it well over, but could not improve on his straightforward version. It seemed good enough to him.

"Top boy," snapped the Head.

"'*Liber est Balbo*,' said Verrey, with promptitude.

"Putting the gentleman's name first," said the Head, "and the verb before the noun, we will allow that translation. I fear you will have to improve your Latin, Evans," he went on, "if you are to pass the test which will be set you in December. How old are you, boy?"

Evans's muttered reply was inaudible.

"You will have to show great diligence," proceeded Mr. Talbot, "to pass the Senior Cambridge. Though possibly," he added, his eyes on the Welshman's burly frame, "it is the intention of your father to make you a blacksmith. As it is, however, improbable that he has designed that career for you, let me counsel you to pay a little more attention to developing your brains rather than your limbs."

A hot rejoinder was on the tip of Evans's tongue, but he held himself in. He felt that he would like to jump forward and screw his tormentor's neck. He was accustomed to a certain amount of sarcasm from masters, sarcasm being a weapon which is used freely—often too freely—in scholastic circles, but this palpable gibe at his appearance galled him to the quick.

Verrey held his place at the top of the form, and Evans was content to remain at the bottom of it. After the invective which had been addressed to him he would not have answered a question had he known the answer. In sullen silence, therefore, he stood at the end of the row of boys, the object of ridicule, hit but unable to hit back.

When the marks had been taken down, the Head once more turned to the Welshman.

"I believe, Evans," he said, "that you have some lines for me. They were set some little time ago, but evidently you are content to remain gated for an unlimited period."

"I've done them," muttered Evans.

"Speak properly, boy!"

"I have done them, sir," said Evans.

"Then hand them up."

Evans went to his desk, and flinging back

the lid with a force that made the head master start, took out an exercise book, which he gave to Mr. Talbot. Opening it, the Head stared for an inordinately long time at the first page, then flashed his gaze upon the Welshman.

"This is," he said, "a literary production that was not, I imagine, intended for my eyes. However, I will retain it. You will bring your lines to my study after chapel this evening."

The Head stared for a long time at the first page, then flashed his gaze upon Black Evans.

He took up his mortar-board and swept out of the room.

Vêrrey turned to his friend.

"I say—you don't mean to say——

But Evans, surly and grim, pushed him aside. For, in view of the fact that the lines he had given up were emphatically English, consisting as they did of his novel, "Talbot the Tyrant," he was in no mood even to explain that he had made a ghastly mistake, consequent on his exercise books having got mixed up.

CHAPTER XIII

A NOVELIST'S REWARD

THE head master was studying the libellous garbage upon which Evans Senior had apparently been employing his spare time, and possibly a good deal of his time that was not spare.

Mr. Talbot once again glanced at the opening page: "TALBOT THE TRYANT: THE TALE OF A BAD MAN. CHAPTER ONE.—SNEAKING THE BEER MONEY. The shades of night were falling fast as a weedy-looking lad in a frayed Eton suit emerged from the back door of a fish shop in Whitechapel, and, jug in hand, headed in the direction of the nearest tavern—"

The Head turned over the pages impatiently. He could not deny that Evans displayed a certain crude talent for narrative. More than this, as Mr. Talbot observed, not without a wince, the fellow had a quick eye for one's gait and mannerisms. It did not occur to the Head that this nonsense took the shape of

return compliments for those dealt out to the Welshman during morning school. If Evans had been likened to a blacksmith, Mr. Talbot now learned that his voice resembled that of a cheap gramophone; if Evans had been held up as a dunce, the head master gathered that in the eyes of this boy he appeared more in the guise of a smart counter-hand in a tobacconist's shop than a master entitled to the respect of his pupils. There were many thrusts in the story that hit home.

The head put on his thinking cap. Of what use was it simply to thrash a boy such as this? Far better have him "requested" without more ado. There was a half-way line between leaving Christ's College of one's own accord and being expelled. When a boy had behaved in a consistently unruly way for some time, and, though having done nothing flagrantly wrong, was considered an undesirable person, his parents were "requested" to withdraw him, which withdrawal did not take place until the end of the term. So while the College was relieved of his presence, the stigma of expulsion was not cast upon him. It was really a very happy idea of the late head master's.

"Better have him requested," muttered the Head, and he rang the bell for King.

"Inform Evans Senior, if you please," he said to the servant, "that I do not wish to see him this evening. And tell him that the lines he has done are to be shown up to his form master. He may consider himself ungated."

"Very good, sir," said King.

The message rather puzzled Evans and rendered him a little uncomfortable. This meant more than a whacking, because a whacking was never postponed. It was a thing that the head master himself was always glad to get over. He wished now that he had kept his novel and lines apart. Doubtless the Head had concluded he had purposely given up the novel. Should he go and reassure him on the point?

Evans thought it over and decided that he would not. No, he would let matters remain as they were. After all, if the Head liked to be upset by something which Evans had written purely for his own amusement—and surely he had a right to write for his own amusement!—let him. The novel hadn't been posted to the Head, nor had it been sent to the editor of the *Collegian*. The Head, as a matter of fact, had no more right to read it than to read anybody else's private literary work.

Evans therefore did his best to dismiss the matter from his mind, and went out to practise shots at goal, for he had received the Head's communication between morning school and dinner-time.

Evans found a good many other fellows practising. This unexpected fixture with Pulborough had put the school on its mettle. It was the very best thing that could have happened to reconcile Christ's to Soccer. Though they expected to get a frightful thrashing from such a crack school, Christ's were determined to put up as good a fight as possible.

"Hullo, here's that fellow Evans," said one of the Pagans to Norman, as the Welshman entered the field. "Tolly's ungated the brute at last!"

"Ought to make a useful man when he gets into our game," replied Norman.

Just then the ball came rolling over the turf towards Evans, who was just crossing the touchline. He stopped the ball, dribbled it for a few yards, and then sent in a shot which just skimmed the crossbar.

"Businesslike," muttered Norman. "Perhaps he has played a bit. Someone was telling me he has been putting the kids through their paces in the upper field."

Soon after this Evans put in a rousing shot that fairly beat the goal-keeper, who, being the same Pagan that officiated at the famous exhibition match, was no mean custodian.

"I say, do you play this game?" said Norman to Evans.

"A bit," said Evans.

"But I thought you were a Rugger man."

"Oh, I've played about with the pro's down at home," said Evans.

"Pro's, eh?" said Norman, with evident disapproval. "I hope you didn't pick up everything they do!"

"Most of it," replied Evans, who delighted in annoying this superior gentleman. "I'm a perfect artist at bringing down a man a yard outside the penalty area."

Evans played in the pick-up game that afternoon. Norman, the opposing captain, not wishing to be experimented on in the neighbourhood of the penalty area, wisely elected to play at full back instead of at centre forward, his usual position. For how was he to know that Evans's remark was simply a specimen of the Welshman's grim humour!

Evans played at right back, with a Pagan

as his partner on the left. It was good to him to feel the springy turf beneath his feet again —real turf, not the rough tussocks of the upper field; good to be out here in the open with a hard football at his feet. He revelled in breaking up a combined rush of the forwards, in receiving the ball on his toe from a long kick, or on his head from a short one, and passing it to one of his forwards. Half an hour each way seemed all too short for him. During that hour, however, he had kept his goal intact, and the goalie had been very little troubled with shots.

Norman, watching him narrowly, saw that Evans, without in any way playing a foul game, had palpably learned his football in professional company. He had the deadly accuracy and the confidence of the professional; was never flurried even when, the ball dropping to him from a high kick, and the opposing forwards close up in force, a mistake meant an almost certain goal.

"Pity we didn't have him against Malling's," said Norman grudgingly to Greatheart, as they walked up to the changing room.

"He'll be useful against Pulborough, by Jove!" replied Greatheart.

"If he isn't sacked by then," put in Norman.

"Well, good as he is," grumbled Greatheart, "it's a nuisance being skippered by such a clown."

"As to that," returned Norman mysteriously, "we shall see what we shall see."

Upon which Greatheart, who knew that Norman enjoyed the Head's confidence to a far greater extent than Colebrook even, immediately became alive with expectation.

For the Head, considering the case of Evans, had come to the conclusion that to suggest his being "requested" thus early in the term would be a rather too drastic course to adopt. Still, he could not overlook this scurrilous novel. Evans might say he had never intended to hand it up instead of lines, and that in any case it had no connection with the head master; but the head master, while willing to accept the first explanation, did not intend to accept the second. That such a boy should continue to captain the school at football was not to be thought of.

After chapel, therefore, when the school repaired to Big School for roll-call, the Head was seen to be in the company of the master on duty.

"Hullo!" said Carson to Dawson, as they went to their places. "What's the excite?"

In Christ's vernacular an "excite" was anything out of the ordinary. There was generally an "excite," for instance, when the head master appeared at the last roll-call of the day. As a rule he was not seen after afternoon school, except at chapel, and not always then.

"I'm fed up with excites," said Dawson, yawning.

"What's the row, Arrowsmith?" inquired Carson of the *Collegian* editor as the latter passed.

"Any chap who can't say the Iliad off by heart by the time he's twenty-one is to get six months hard labour," replied the prefect.

Carson exploded, drawing a quick glance from the Head in his direction.

While the roll was called the Head stood by the master on duty. When the last name on the roll had been called, he stepped to the front of the dais.

"I have a duty to discharge," he said, "which, though unpleasant and painful to me, is highly necessary. It is my very painful duty to annul the recent election of football captain."

"Got his knife into Evans," muttered Dawson to Carson.

Carson hissed.

For the second time in the space of five minutes the Head's glance fell on the Fifth Former.

"The boy who hissed, stand up."

No one stood up.

"If the boy who hissed does not stand up, the whole school will be gated for a week."

Carson hesitated; then stood up.

"Go to my study," said the Head.

In a dramatic silence Carson stumbled through an alley of knees and feet, and made an undignified exit from Big School.

"In ordinary circumstances," proceeded the Head, "I should not interfere with the election, as I believe in the custom of the senior boys electing their captain. But, taking into consideration the conduct and character," he dwelt momentarily on the word, "of the boy you have elected, I have no other course to pursue but to deprive him of a position of which I consider him unworthy."

He paused deliberately. If anyone else wanted to hiss, here was the opportunity. No one availed himself of it.

A hundred faces were turned in Evans's direction, but the Welshman sat gnawing his knuckles, apparently indifferent.

"As to his successor," proceeded the Head,

" the choice lies between Colebrook, head of the school, and Norman. At the election these two boys polled an equal number of votes. In view of the fact, however, that Colebrook is new to the code which we have now adopted, I think I am acting in the best interests of the school in appointing Norman to the captaincy of football."

He turned, took up his mortar-board from the desk, and walked out of the room.

CHAPTER XIV

INTRODUCING HARLEQUIN

THE fellows in the dormitory were nearly undressed when Carson returned from his ordeal, endeavouring, though with little success, to appear as if nothing had happened. He was received with sympathy, and no one looked closely at his flushed face and compressed lips.

"How many?" asked Dawson, casually, as he buttoned the jacket of his pyjamas.

"A dozen, and one for luck," replied the sufferer, tearing down his bed-clothes by way of hiding his emotion in action. He was glad to slide down on to his knees and say his prayers, and when he arose he seemed to have recovered a good deal of his usual self-possession.

"I retrieved something of value to *you*, at any rate, Fewlass," he observed, tossing a torn exercise book on to the dormitory prefect's bed.

Evans, who was winding up his watch, glanced at the book, and then gave a grunt of satisfaction. It was his novel.

"Saw it in the waste-paper basket while I was waiting for the Man," explained Carson, "so I collared it."

"Good!" said Evans, who had never expected to see it again.

"You can paste it together, and it will be as good as ever," said Dawson, inspecting the manuscript, which had sustained only one clean rip from top to bottom.

"And Carson shall put pictures to it," said Evans. "A reward for you, my man."

There is hardly a fellow who can't do one thing well. Carson, slack in all subjects, and rank bad in most, had displayed a certain talent with his pencil which hitherto had been devoted largely to caricatures of the masters and the school officials.

Hereafter, therefore, life possessed a new and fearful joy for the partners; that is, the illustrating of the most stirring episodes in "Talbot the Tyrant." In fact, the novel no longer possessed a single author, Dawson taking a hand in suggesting incidents and planning out pictures. Dame Alice Estcourt had bequeathed her library to the school, and one of the many old-fashioned tomes it contained was a bound volume of the periodical fiction popular half a century ago. The illustrations, though dealing with melo-dramatic subjects, were executed with great care and abundant skill. They occupied the whole width of the volume's broad pages, ample space being thus afforded for all sorts of detail. Carson, with the absence of scruple which is often a characteristic of the fledgeling artist, deliberately copied these pictures, substituting the characters in "Talbot the Tyrant" for those figuring in the illustrations. One of these pictures represented a miser counting his hoard of wealth. Clad in a dressing-gown and skull-cap, with his lean feet thrust into carpet slippers, he sat at a table, loaded with bags of gold, poring over his ledger. His right hand grasping a pen, with his left he waved off a weeping young widow with two children clinging to her skirts. Under Carson's pencil Talbot became the occupant of the chair, a mortar-board taking the place of the skull-cap, and a master's gown of the dressing-gown.

Carson had not been in bed long when the slipshod step of Corporal Freeman was heard in the corridor. The servant glanced maliciously at Carson as he came in.

"What ho, Antipon!" was Dawson's greeting to the emaciated official.

Carson chuckled.

"Aye, you may laugh," growled the corporal, "but I reckon you was laughing on the other side of your face ten minutes ago!"

"Corporal," said Dawson, "didn't you once see service in China?"

"What if I did?" inquired the servant in a surly tone.

"I knew it!" cried Dawson, thumping his counterpane.

"Knew what!" demanded Freeman.

When in the mood the ex-soldier would talk garrulously of his experiences, and he delighted in recounting the part he played in the historic relief of the legations.

"That explains it," added Dawson.

"Explains what?" demanded Corporal Freeman, turning round with his fingers on the tap of the gas-bracket.

"He was bastinadoed!" gurgled Dawson, burying his nose in his pillow.

With an exclamation of anger, for he particularly loathed any reference to the tenderness of foot which had afflicted him with a chronic shuffle, the servant waved an expostulating hand towards the head of the dormitory.

"Mr. Evans," he cried, "if I can't enter this room without being made game of, I'll report it to the 'ead master. It ain't to be borne!"

And, turning out the gas, he retreated in hot indignation. And little, as he hurried off, did he imagine that he had uttered a phrase destined to become as historic in its way as that Relief in which, according to his own account, he had taken such a conspicuous part. Fat Frank, installed as a character in "Talbot the Tyrant," figured thenceforth as the favourite object of Talbot's brutalities. When in a mood to be gay Talbot would throw bottles at his slave, set his dog on him, make him fish pennies with his lips out of a pail of water. There was no end to the ingenuities of torture devised by the tyrant, and on every occasion the suffering manservant was made to exclaim (without apparently producing the slightest effect on his callous employer), "*It ain't to be borne!*"

The Christians were settling down with the best grace they could muster to the new rule of things. The age-limit scheme, as the head master anticipated, had produced a wave of effort in keeping with its severity. With many, preparation was now a period of mental stress rather than a spell affording opportunity for flipping pellets about or reading library books under cover of a barricade of dictionaries. It was get on or get out with a vengeance.

Norman took over the captaincy as to the manner born. He had been captain of both cricket and football at Pageways, and knew well how to handle his men. He was keen, too, and often denied himself footer in order to watch the other games. As a disciplinarian he earned the love of few, but none could deny that he was a live man at his work. In school and out of school he never slacked, being the soul of punctuality and diligence. When his week of duty came round he read the lesson twice daily in chapel as a lesson should be read—never hurrying, giving full value to every word and phrase. The other prefects said he was theatrical—nevertheless, his reading compelled their attention. Though heartily detested, he was obeyed by the school with a promptitude accorded to no other prefect.

It was obvious, even to the most prejudiced, that the head master's alteration of the football captaincy was entirely justified. Nevertheless Evans, in his deposed and humiliated state, had his sympathisers. One of these was Mr. Colles, by nature a man who sided with the under-dog. Hitherto Mr. Colles had never taken much notice of Evans. But every cloud has its silver lining. His degradation brought Evans under the second master's notice. Mr. Colles wanted to know something about a boy who had been elected to a high position by his schoolfellows, only to be dethroned by the head master.

To relieve the pressure on the sleeping accommodation caused by the influx of forty new boys, a house situated close to the school boundaries had been taken. It went by the name of Colles' House, for Mr. Colles had been appointed to the charge of it. The new head master, far-seeing and ambitious, perceived in these extra-mural premises the beginning of the school's division into houses. With increasing numbers he saw other houses taken and filled. A leap into the future converted the original buildings into class-rooms, dining hall, library, laboratory, and head master's house only; the rest of the school going nightly to their houses. He built, not castles, but school-houses in the air.

Mr. Colles had welcomed his change of quarters. His domestic staff consisted of a housekeeper and maid. He had a pleasant sitting room at the back, opening through French windows on to the garden.

The term had not gone far when it occurred to Mr. Colles that it would be a good idea to have a few boys to tea, and not necessarily boys in his own house. Evans was in his mind when he made this resolve. Meeting the Welshman in the upper field one afternoon, he stopped him.

"Well, Evans, how goes the football?"

Evans was wondering why Mr. Colles should take the trouble to speak to him. All his school life masters had either let him severely alone, or had only spoken to him in order to administer a reproof.

"Getting into the new game, I hope! By the way, I want you to come to tea with me on Sunday, and bring another fellow. Who is your particular friend?"

Evans considered the point. Who *was* his

particular friend? Come to think of it, he hadn't one. Still, he must name somebody.

"Verrey isn't a bad chap," he replied.

Mr. Colles smiled. Evans seemed to be submitting the name for his approval.

"Verrey is quite a good chap, I fancy. Well, bring him. Bring another fellow, too. Anybody you like."

"Thank you, sir," said Evans.

Mr. Colles left the Welshman puzzled as to why he had been singled out for this honour. Strolling on, he was considering who might appropriately be added to the party, and reflecting that one couldn't very well take Carson without Dawson or Dawson without Carson, when a voice sounded at his elbow.

"Have a jumble, Evans?"

He looked down. Pilcher, greatly daring, was holding out a paper bag to him. Pilcher had received six stamps from home that morning, and, having just expended one at the tuckshop, where stamps were regarded as legal tender, was wondering whom he could ask to share his tuck. For he had noticed that all the boys shared their tuck with somebody. He had no chum in the First, and it was not to be supposed that any boy in a higher form would deign to be friendly with such a kid. So he was quite alone with his jumbles.

Evans was always ready for eatables. He took a jumble out of the bag, doubled it, and made one mouthful of it.

"Thanks," he said. "Don't you know some kid to share your grub with?"

Pilcher shook his head.

"Been kicking them, as I told you?"

Pilcher shook his head vehemently. But he did not add that the other kids had mostly been kicking *him*. He crammed the bag into his pocket and was limping off when Evans called to him.

"Say, my man!"

Pilcher looked round.

"Care to go out to tea on Sunday?"

"Rather!" said Pilcher.

"All right. Three-thirty sharp. Colles' House."

Evans had never taken any notice of a kid before, except to make him fag, or field at cricket practice. It occurred to him as curious that he should trouble to think about this wretched little creature. However, he forgot about Pilcher a moment after, and did not remember him again till Sunday at three-thirty, when he found him lurking in the corridor outside the Lower Fifth room, looking quite smart in spite of the Eton suit that covered half his hands and swamped his boots—the suit, in fact, which was to "allow for growing."

The three found Mr. Colles waiting for them in the doorway of his house. He was wearing a blazer with his college arms on its pocket, and was blowing a cloud of smoke from a meerschaum pipe.

Nothing could have been more hospitable than his demeanour. "Come in, boys," he said, and led them into his sitting-room.

Accustomed as they were to plain, rough surroundings, the room seemed to them a place quite outside of their world. The easy chairs, the piano with the photographs upon it, the engravings on the walls, the soft carpet, the great tiger-skin hearthrug—this was luxury indeed.

An epergne filled with nuts and sweetmeats stood on the table. "Help yourselves," said Mr. Colles, "and don't spare them," and then, knowing how diffident boys are at accepting an invitation of this kind, he muttered something about "seeing about tea," and bustled out.

During his five minutes' absence they did good work among the delicacies.

"Tea at four," said Mr. Colles. "Let's go into the garden."

On the lawn were comfortable basket-chairs, and here they sat down. Smoking his pipe, the second master gently guided the conversation into easy channels, and soon all three were talking with an ease that astonished themselves. Even Pilcher laughed as he had not laughed since he had been at school.

They walked round the garden, and Mr. Colles told them many things they had never known before about flowers, and told them in such an interesting way that they immediately felt they would like to be gardeners. Evans had often wondered how people could be interested in gardens, but when Mr. Colles explained the science of bringing on this and that flower and this and that plant, and how to coax flowers that were backward, and how to protect other flowers that were prospering, the Welshman had to admit that there was a good deal in it.

And then the tea! What thought Mr. Colles had given it, although he pretended that the housekeeper had only just learned he had company!

Even a person with no appetite could have made a good tea, so tempting were the delicately spread sandwiches of potted meat, and all sorts of cakes of whose existence certainly young Pilcher was absolutely ignorant—cakes that seemed to melt in your mouth, cakes with a beautiful fragrance of cocoanut, cakes with chocolate in them. And you would have thought that all this, with two or three cups of tea, and not very small cups either, would have been enough. But no! After tea had been cleared away they must finish up the contents of the epergne, and what they didn't finish they were commanded to put into their pockets. Tea! It was a banquet!

"And now," said Mr. Colles, at about a quarter to five, "we four friends must part. I am preaching to-night, and must look over my sermon." In fact, they had noticed several big books on the lawn by his chair. "Why," he added suddenly, "upon my word, I had forgotten all about Harlequin! The lazy fellow's been asleep all the afternoon."

At the back of the kitchen there was an enclosure of trellis-work, and as this was covered with Virginia creeper now in its abundant autumn glory, the boys had not observed that a huge kennel stood within. Mr. Colles' exclamation had been evoked by the sudden stalking forth from the enclosure of a great bloodhound. First thrusting his muzzle into the master's hand, the animal inspected the three boys with a grave air.

"Shake hands, Harlequin," said Mr. Colles, and the hound put out his paw for Verrey to shake; he then gave it to Pilcher, but when he came to Evans he dropped it.

"Shake hands, sir!" commanded the dog's master. "This is a friend of mine."

But Harlequin walked away.

Evans stepped forward. "Come on, doggie," he said; "shake hands." And he gazed steadily at the big animal, which still backed away, growling menacingly.

"Come," said Evans, holding out his hand, "make friends, won't you, my man?"

"Take care," said Mr. Colles; "he doesn't like everybody."

"Why, I never had a dog beat me yet," said Evans, advancing without the slightest fear, and gripping the great beast by the throat. "Now, my man," he said, "what's the matter?"

A sound as of distant thunder came from the dog's deep chest. There was no friendliness in it.

Evans laughed. "Don't like me?" he said, and with a quick movement he pulled the dog up on to its hind legs. "Let's have a look at those big teeth of yours," he added, forcing the hound's jaws apart.

"Be careful," cried Mr. Colles, while Pilcher trembled with apprehension as a ferocious snarl greeted Evans's act.

"Shake hands, boy," said Evans, releasing him, and reluctantly Harlequin put out his paw.

The Welshman laughed and turned away.

"I have never seen anyone else take such a liberty with Harlequin," said the master.

"Indeed, it's no good being afraid of a dog, sir," replied Evans.

The three thanked their host in the clumsy, sincere way that expresses so much more than polished sentences, and departed, Mr. Colles accompanying them to the gate.

"Strange fellow, that," he thought. "Bound to be expelled in the long run, I should say."

And he went back to his quiet garden and his books.

CHAPTER XV

A COMMON FOE

"WELL," said Evans, "what about a walk? I must show you our beautiful countryside, Mr. Verrey," he added graciously, for the excellent meal recently partaken of had put him in a royal temper.

"Can I come?" asked Pilcher.

"It will be a bit of a stretch for *you*, Gametoes, I'm afraid," said Evans, though not unkindly.

"I'm sure I can keep up," cried Pilcher anxiously. "My leg isn't weak, you know. It's only a little bit shorter than the other. I can go at a fearful lick if I like," and he hobbled rapidly ahead in a way that would have provoked mirth in fellows of a baser mould than Evans and Verrey.

"All right," said Evans. "Tell us if you find we're going too fast."

And so the three went off countrywards, Evans with his athletic, untiring stride, Verrey with his usual shambling gait, talking and laughing incessantly, and little Pilcher pegging along by the Welshman like a torpedo boat in attendance on a battleship.

When Pilcher had pluckily kept up with them for a mile or so, however, Evans pulled him up.

"We're going over a rough and dangerous

country, my man," he said, "and so you'd better be getting home to mother."

Directly he had uttered the words he regretted them. The new boy flushed painfully, and although he tried to restrain his emotion a mistiness came into his eyes. Without a word he turned and hobbled back towards the school.

"Still homesick," growled Evans. "A pretty miserable time *he* has, I guess, being ragged by the kids in the First."

They walked on. Presently Evans slackened his step and produced a small briar pipe, of the type known as "nose-warmer," from his pocket.

Verrey's eyes opened wide as Evans pulled out a tobacco-pouch and filled his pipe.

"Suppose you're copped?" he said. "What's the penalty?"

"First offence," said Evans, "six; second offence, sent to the Man."

"Yes," said his companion, "and what then?"

"I don't know what happens after that," said Evans. "I have only been caught twice."

"Running a bit of a risk, aren't you?"

"No," said Evans, putting a match to his pipe. "Start fresh with a new Man. Think we'll get over here," and he vaulted over a gate which led into a field of turnips.

Pursuing a narrow path through the turnips, they came at length to a stile on the yonder side of which ran a narrow lane whose soft red clay had been churned into deep ruts by heavy cart-wheels.

"Shouldn't like to bike along here," observed Verrey.

"Indeed, you're never likely to," said Evans, "for it's out of bounds, my man."

"Out of bounds!"

"Yes," said Evans; "we've been working round west of the school. Sorry to have led you into doing wrong, but you needn't have come, you know."

"Oh, I like that!" cried Verrey. "I didn't know where you were going to take me."

"Go back, then," said Evans, walking off down the lane.

But this was not to Verrey's liking.

"Hang on," he cried. "I'm coming." And he hurried with difficulty over the deep ruts and rejoined his companion.

"What do you get if you're caught out of bounds?" he asked breathlessly.

"Six," was the laconic reply, "if you're caught about here, but if you're down town you're sent to the Man."

"Who gives you the six?" asked Verrey.

"Confound it, then," said Evans irritably, "who do you think? The master or pre. who catches you, of course."

"What! Do you mean to say that a pre. would say anything to *you*?" demanded Verrey, with a glance at Evans's brawny limbs.

"I *don't* think," grinned Evans.

He was destined, however, to have his boast put to the proof before many moments had elapsed, for on rounding the next corner of the lane they walked straight into Norman and Greatheart.

Verrey's heart gave a thump.

Evans was going past without recognising them when Norman called to him.

"Hullo, there, Evans!"

Evans, still smoking defiantly, turned round and faced the new prefect, but without saying anything.

"Evans, you and Verrey are out of bounds," said Norman quietly, "and you're smoking."

"Indeed, yes," said Evans, blowing a cloud of smoke into the air.

"You will both come to my study before Second School to-morrow," said Norman. "Meanwhile, give me that pipe," and with the word he stretched out his hand.

For reply Evans gave a taunting laugh and smacked the open hand away, but as he was in the very act of doing it he received from Norman's other hand a clout on the jaw that shook the pipe from between his teeth and caused it to fall to the ground.

"Thanks," said Norman coolly, as, stooping quickly, he secured the forbidden article.

Evans stood as if stupefied. To have his face smacked as if he were a kid—he, Evans! For a second or two he could hardly grasp what had happened. Then slowly it dawned on him that this new snob of a Pagan was a man to be reckoned with.

"Will you fight?" he roared, stepping up to Norman.

"No," said Norman.

"Take that, then," said Evans, and with the word he aimed a savage blow at Norman's face with his clenched fist.

But the blow fell on empty air, for Norman had simply moved his head aside, and the impetus of the Welshman's blow made Evans stumble forward foolishly. The man had science, then. And, in truth, the man had. That pretty footwork of Norman's in the foot-

ball field hadn't all been learnt in the open.

"Come on!" Evans roared, standing up.

"But I tell you I don't want to fight," said Norman. "What an insufferable fool you are! I am a prefect, and I catch you not only out of bounds, but smoking, and in addition to that taking another fellow out of bounds who hardly knows the ropes yet."

what might occur. Both knew of Norman's science as a boxer, but they had also had proof of Evans's great strength.

And then, just as things seemed to be at their ugliest, and both Greatheart and Verrey were wishing themselves a hundred miles away, as perhaps Norman and Evans were also, an unlooked-for interruption occurred. From a

With a well-planted blow Evans hit the townee with such force that he went staggering back. It was the signal for general hostilities to begin.

"And I tell you," gasped out Evans, "that I'm not going to be lorded over by you kid-gloved gentlemen. Give me my pipe back, will you?" And trembling with rage he stepped up to Norman and stood looking him steadily in the face.

It was a dramatic situation, and both Greatheart and Verrey were apprehensive as to

distance of about forty yards came a rough call of "Hullo, Collegers!" and the boys from the school, whose attention hitherto had been riveted solely on themselves, looked up to see a band of townees fully half a dozen strong approaching in no friendly attitude. In fact, the yell had hardly fallen on their ears when a stone whizzed through

the air and narrowly missed Greatheart's head.

The approaching party was not composed of mere lads. It was a party of the kind that is unpleasantly prominent both in town and country on what is meant to be the Day of Rest. On this day the hooligan of anything between sixteen and twenty spends his time about the streets and roads with a number of his companions, throwing rough jests at giggling servant girls, skylarking with his fellows, and, if the chance come his way, picking quarrels with any lads of his own age who appear to belong to a superior station in life. Between such hobbledehoys and an institution like Christ's College there exists a perpetual feud. The hobbledehoy's favourite weapon is a stone, and he is also very quick with his feet, either to kick an opponent or to make his escape. If his party appears to be outnumbered there are a few stones and jeers of defiance; if, on the other hand, he outnumbers the foe, he is full of bravery. There is only one way of dealing with him, but he is dealt with in that way but seldom.

Although the attitude of the townees was menacing in the extreme, the three Pagans and the one Christian stood their ground firmly; all of them, it must be confessed, being distinctly relieved by the interruption. It cannot be said, however, that Verrey had much stomach for the contest that appeared unavoidable, as he was by no means a warlike individual. Still, though timid by nature, he had his share of pluck. Greatheart was just a normal boy of average strength and courage, Norman surveyed the approaching host superciliously. He had been a person of considerable importance at Pageways, where no street-boy had dreamt of trying to molest him. It had not yet occurred to him that he had come into a different sort of country. Only Evans experienced a thrill of real joy at the thought of having a go at someone. The scowl on his face deepened and his lips closed tightly.

"We'll stay where we are," said Norman quietly. "We don't want any row. Perhaps they'll go by."

So the little party from Christ's College remained precisely where the townees had first perceived them. The townees, observing their firm stand, faltered for a moment. Then they came on slowly.

In spite of the fact that there was plenty of space to pass on either side, the leader of the roughs, a big fellow with a ruddy face and a small, gaily coloured feather in the riband of his bowler hat, seemed to think there was not quite enough room for his party.

"'Oo yer pushin' of?" he observed to the innocent Verrey, after purposely lurching against him.

"I wasn't pushing you," said Verrey.

"Yes, you was," rejoined the lout; "and I'll dust yer coat if yer give me any sauce."

"Dust mine," said Evans, stepping up to him.

"Hullo," jeered the townee, "here's a fellow who's escaped from a beauty show!"

For reply Evans hit him in the neck just where the collar makes an opening. It was a well-planted blow, delivered with all the force of a man whose temper had been at boiling-point for some minutes.

The townee, with a sort of choke, fell back, but the blow was a signal for general hostilities. The other five closed on the remaining three schoolboys. The smallest of the townees went for Verrey, and although Verrey hit out gallantly, he very soon found that he was no match for his opponent. Two of the other cads flung themselves at Norman and two at Greatheart, and it was a case of science against windmill methods. It is pretty easy to keep out of the way of one windmill, but not out of the way of two. Soon Norman had a cut lip, and Greatheart was gasping from a blow over the heart.

Glancing round the field of battle with the quick eye of a general who takes in a lot in a little time, Evans saw that he would soon be wanted elsewhere. The leader of the roughs, having had his choke, came at him in the approved windmill manner, and Evans hit him hard on his fat red jaw. That checked him for a moment, and just as he was thinking of running in again, Evans took the initiative and smote him with great vigour on the nose. Then, seeing that it was no time for the delicate observance of boxing etiquette, he tripped the big townee up and left him sprawling by the hedge.

He was just in time to prevent Greatheart from being borne to the ground. He got hold of one of the cads and fairly flung him after his leader. He hit the other over the right ear, and the lout paused to hold his ear and bellow.

Evans could see Norman was bleeding from the mouth, but Verrey was in worse case, for his opponent had pinned him down to the ground, the Pagan putting up only a feeble

resistance to the blows rained upon him. Dashing up to the couple, Evans gave the hooligan such a hefty whack with his open hand over the side of the face that the rustic couldn't eat his meals in comfort for a week after.

And now finally Evans turned towards Norman, whose opponents, having received one or two doughty blows in the face, were wandering round him and looking for a chance to dash in and render him powerless to use his long arms. This chance occurred just as Evans arrived. One of the louts rushed in and clasped Norman round the arms, and while he was thus held the other one hit him in the face. He had hardly delivered the blow, however, when the Welshman's fist took him just on the point of the chin, and he dropped like a stone. The other cad, seeing himself opposed by two, loosened his hold of Norman and took to his heels, but, just as he was flying at top speed, Evans rendered him such hearty progress with a thump over the spine that the gentleman went down with a shriek.

There was nothing now left for the townees except flight. To remain on the spot would be to court further disaster. As Evans turned from the lout he had spread-eagled, the man with the red neck took aim at him with a clod of turf. Seeing Evans coming for him, however, he ran. Simultaneously the other rustics scrambled to their feet and pelted after their leader. But they did not get off without half a dozen hearty kicks from the schoolboys, who chased them for a good hundred yards.

When the townees had withdrawn, the three Pagans and one Christian took stock of their injuries. Nothing very serious had been done, although Norman's lip was beginning to swell, and Verrey hardly looked the nice boy he had been when he set out from the college.

"Well," said Norman, "we're out of that all right, thanks to Evans," and he forced a smile.

"Oh, I'm used to it," said Evans gruffly. "We're always having these turn-ups."

Slowly they strolled along the lane towards the school. It did not comfort Norman to reflect that these dangers of the country-side would be ever present, at least on Sundays, and that he would be unable to take a walk without being on the watch. He saw that his science, learnt in a gymnasium, with full observance given to the rules of the ring, would not be of very much use to him in this go-as-you-please sort of warfare. Evans's hit-a-man-where-you-can methods were far more effectual, it was plain. And the gallant way in which Evans had come to his assistance really made him feel rather uncomfortable about the pipe. Still, though somewhat of a prig, he was a man of high principle, and a deficiency of moral courage had never been one of his faults.

They came at last to where two roads met, and Evans said that he and Verrey would be branching off there.

"Well, so long," said Norman, and then, after a moment's hesitation, he added, "I say, you can have your pipe, if you like.

"Thanks," said Evans, without comment, as he accepted the briar back.

"But, look here," said Norman, "if I catch you smoking again, you know, I shan't overlook it."

"Who wants you to?" retorted Evans.

"If I do," said Norman steadily, "you must understand I shall report you to the Head. At the same time, I am very much obliged to you for pulling those two fellows off me."

"A pleasure," said Evans, shrugging his wide shoulders. And it certainly had been a pleasure to him to act in the way he had done. "Coming, Verrey," he added, "or going with them?"

"Why, I'm out with *you*," said Verrey, staring hard at him.

And so they walked off together.

"Indeed," said Evans, when they were out of sight of the two prefects, "for a fellow who looks as if he might have been a girl you're not so bad."

"Well," said Verrey, "take the advice of a boy-girl, and don't let Norman catch you smoking or out of bounds again, or he'll report you for a certainty."

"Chance it," said Evans, with his pipe between his teeth.

(Another long instalment of this splendid serial next month.)

BOXING FOR BOYS

BY A. L. CHAMPNEYS

(Second Article.)

A Splendid New Series of Practical and Instructive Articles by the Famous Heavyweight Champion of Oxford University in 1899, 1900, and 1901

THE habit of turning in the left toe is usually due to the whole body being turned too far sideways, as the diagrams on the opposite page will explain.

In Diagram 1 it is obvious that the left foot, when pointed in the right direction (indicated by the dotted line), is in a very uncomfortable and unnatural position, and, in consequence, it is usually always turned in as in No. 2, and the left-handers are consequently pulled round in the direction in which the toe is pointing, thus missing their mark.

It may also be noted that, when the feet are in the positions shown in 1 and 2, a very slight push from either side is sufficient to upset the boxer's equilibrium. No. 3, which shows the correct position for the feet, is not only comfortable and natural, but is free from the disadvantages which are so obvious in the others.

The whole body should be carried easily and comfortably and without muscular tension, so that the boxer is always ready for any movement either of hands or feet. The head, like the rest of the body, should be carried in the most natural position, not thrust forward, nor on the other hand held stiffly back. It should, of course, be turned in the direction of your opponent, but it is not necessary to look at him full face. Many boxers keep their eyes fixed a little to the left side of their adversary, and if you do this you are not so likely to instinctively close them when you see a blow coming, while it is easier from this position to take the blow on the hard part of your skull if you cannot avoid it. It is also said that you can detect your opponent's movements more instantaneously so than by looking straight at him.

Getting About

The first movements which the beginner should practise are the movements of the feet.

You cannot do this in the same way that you ordinarily walk about, because you must always be ready at any moment for any movement of attack or defence; and though, when you move about, your feet obviously cannot remain all the time in the relative positions illustrated above, it is essential that they should never get "crossed" at any moment. If your feet are crossed you are in a hopeless position, and can be tumbled over by a very light blow.

For present purposes we may consider four main movements of the feet: Advancing and retreating, stepping to the left, and stepping to the right. Of these the two former are those which the beginner should first master.

Starting from the position described, the boxer advances by stepping forward with his left foot in the direction indicated by the dotted line in Diagram 3, and immediately bringing his right foot after it, so that the relative positions of the feet are the same at the end as they were at the beginning. In advancing, the left foot must never be carried so far forward that it requires an effort to follow it up with the right.

In retreating, the left foot is carried back till it is close to the right, and the right moved back immediately after. While in advancing you can generally take your own time, retreating is often a matter of some urgency, and you should practise springing back rather than stepping, the impetus being given by the toe of the left foot.

It is most important that these two movements should be practised assiduously until the beginner can perform them quickly and neatly, and, so to speak, automatically. There is nothing so common with beginners as clumsiness in their footwork; and this is a fatal weakness, for if a boxer does not know how to use his feet he will never be able to win a victory with his hands alone.

Both advancing and retreating can be practised by oneself in any room in which there is space to move about, and if your practice disturbs the neighbours that is a mere proof that you are not light and neat in your movements. If you have indiarubber soles on your practice should be almost noiseless.

The more you practise these movements of the feet at the outset the better, and you will soon find that you improve in speed and neatness. Always take care that after either movement your feet are in their proper relative positions. If not, it is a sure indication that you are not doing quite right.

Stepping to the right or left are movements which are less essential at this stage, and which will be more fully dealt with subsequently.

In their simplest form, however, they may be advantageously practised by the beginner together with the movements of advance and retreat.

In stepping to the left the left foot is first moved to the left, the right following, and in

stepping to the right the right foot is moved to the right first and the left follows, the relative positions being maintained in both cases when the movement is complete.

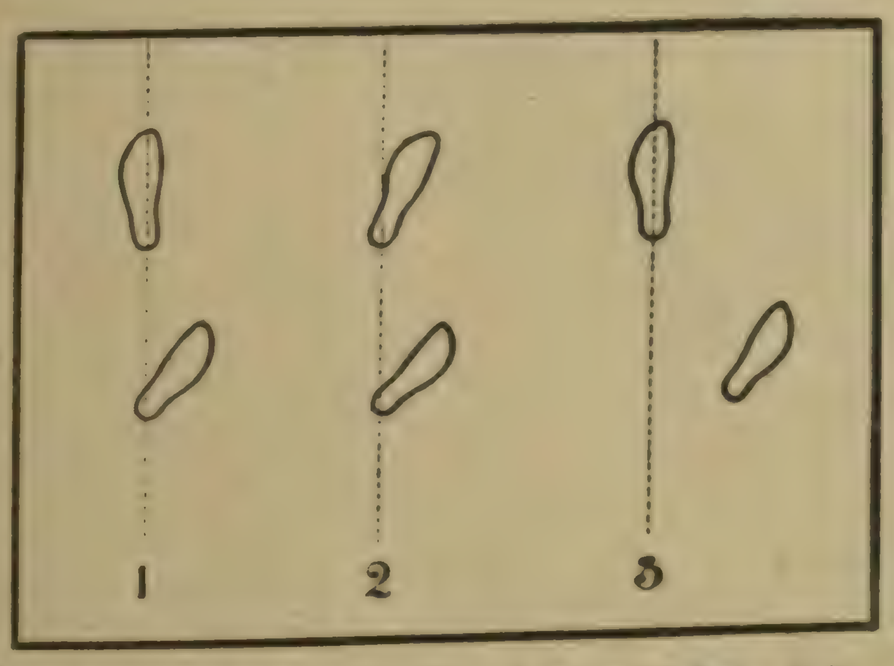
The above constitute, of course, only a portion of all the foot movements in which a boxer must make himself proficient; and the others will be dealt with in connection with the various hits, counters, and so on which will be explained subsequently. The foregoing form, however, the A B C, as it were, of foot-work, and as such must be thoroughly mastered at the very beginning.

Attack

In boxing the methods not only of attack but of defence vary according to the distance separating you from your opponent, and this is, of course, frequently altered.

When the distance is such that you have to step forward in order to reach him it is called "out-fighting," and when he is at less than an arm's length from you it is called "in-fighting."

In the former case your hits will be made mainly with a straight arm, while at close quarters you will use what is known as a half-arm hit. There is also a sort of intermediate or hook hit which will be described later.



No. 1 shows the wrong position of the right foot. It is impossible to maintain this position with ease, and one is unconsciously led to adopt the position shown in No. 2, which is also wrong, as it makes it easy to lose one's balance. No. 3 shows the correct position of the feet.

The boxing at long range—the lead—as was emphasised in the first article of this series, is always made with the left hand and never with the right. The lead may be either a straight hit or a hook, and may be aimed either at the head or at the body. The straight left lead at the head is really the most valuable of all hits, and a boxer with a really first-class left always has a pull over one who is deficient in this particular, for he not only scores faster than his opponent, but keeps him out of reach. This particular hit has, I suppose, won far more victories than all the rest put together, and it is therefore well worth the learner's while to do all he can to become the possessor of a good left, the faster and the straighter the better.

If you have learnt to stand in the correct attitude which has been already described you will find that your left foot and your left forearm will point directly towards your opponent, and generally speaking the forearm should be pointed slightly upwards in the direction of his face. In leading with your left at his head your left foot and left hand should be advanced simultaneously, your foot in the direction of the dotted line in Diagram 3, and your fist straight to its mark, that is, your opponent's face.

In this, as in every other hit, it is most important to remember that neither the muscles of the arm nor those of the hand must be rigid until the moment when the blow actually lands.

The forward movement of the left foot turns the body slightly and brings the left shoulder forward, and consequently almost every part of the body contributes to the force of the blow, from the toe of the right foot up to the knuckles of the left hand; and, of course, the right foot must not be brought forward to follow the left until the blow has landed or missed. It is no uncommon thing to see a beginner's right foot in the air when he is hitting, but the result is, of course, inevitably futile.

Another very usual mistake among learners in leading with the left is to pull back the left hand before hitting. This is generally the result of the left arm being too far extended or the left shoulder being held too far forward. As has been already explained the left arm should be carried with the elbow bent downwards, and the left shoulder, though held further forward than the right, should bear about the same relation to it as the left foot in Diagram 3 does to the right. The mistake illustrated in Diagram 1 is generally responsible for the body being held at the wrong angle.

This left lead at the head, as has been already emphasised, should be assiduously practised until the learner can land the blow with accuracy, speed, and strength. If you have a suitable opponent with whom to practise you should try how often you can get within range, land a left on his face, and get out of reach again without being hit.

The left lead at the body is performed similarly, only, of course, the direction of the left fist is different. It is generally delivered at a rather longer range than the above, and the distance between the feet at the moment when the blow is struck is therefore greater, while the body is turned at a sharper angle. The "mark" is, of course, the place to aim at.

This left lead at the body is very frequently preceded by a feint with the left at the head. Such a feint may be made by simply drawing back the left hand—as you should not do if you are really going to hit. If your opponent steps back he may still be within reach of this left at the body with which you follow up your feint.

You can make a similar feint at the body, the only difference being that in this case you will drop your left hand to the level of the "mark."

Left hooks at head and body differ from the straight leads described above in that you cannot put the whole weight of your body behind them. They are delivered obliquely at a shorter range than the others with the arm slightly bent. It is, however, far more important that the beginner should learn to hit straight before he allows himself to indulge in any form of round hitting.

(Another article next month.)

HIGHWAYMAN JACK

A STORY OF AN EXCITING CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE

By V. R. NENDICK

CHAPTER I

AT THE "RED EAGLE"

THE "Red Eagle" still stands at the cross-roads, half a mile south of Cotsby. A hundred years ago it was a famous hostelry, standing as it did at the intersection of two great roads, and on the edge of Cotsby Moor.

The snow lay thick on the highway on a certain December 23rd, when the "Red Eagle" was in its palmiest days, and the flakes still fell thick and fast.

Within, everything seemed cosier and warmer because of the inclemency without. A great fire roared up the wide chimney, the crackle of the logs answering the shrill wail of the wind as the blast swept over the chimney-pots.

In a snug corner, seated round a table, were four young men chatting, jesting, and arguing by turns, but always good-humouredly. Three yards away, on the other side of the fire, sat a solitary man of middle age. The face that peeped out of his huge great-coat was tanned by exposure, his whiskers and hair were black, his small, dark, restless eyes wandered round and round the long room, scanning all who came and all who went.

"Same old festivities at the Hall, Bob?" queried Hal Somers, the noisiest of the four young men.

"Plus a novelty," laughed Bob Maxwell.

"What's that?" burst in the others eagerly.

"Sir John has a feast on to-morrow. All the bigwigs of Cotsby are to be there," said Bob.

"No! Why, I thought he and they were at loggerheads," put in Will Clinton.

"So they usually are," laughed Maxwell, with a wink. "But I fancy that uncle intends to stand for Parliament."

"Oho!" roared Somers. "That's the game! And who are to be the guests—the mayor, of course?"

"Yes—the mayor, and Sprock, the butcher, Leffer, the goldsmith, and a dozen others. Sir John will send his own coach to convey half a dozen of the most important."

"I don't wish them any harm," observed Jack Warren, with a twinkle in his eye, "but what a joke it would be if some enterprising gentleman of the road were to swoop down upon that coach!"

A burst of merriment greeted this, and a great deal of chaff was indulged in at the expense of the worthy aldermen and councillors of Cotsby.

"I say, good men and true," suddenly interposed Warren, "are you on for a spree?"

"Need you ask at Christmas time?" laughed Somers.

"Anything for sport," cried Clinton.

"The wilder the better," chimed in Maxwell.

"Then listen," began Warren, leaning forward mysteriously. "This idea of the notables of Cotsby being attacked on the moor by highwaymen is simply glorious. Isn't it rather a pity to let them get safely to the Hall for want of a few—horsemen?"

The eyes of the listeners flashed with fun as they grasped his meaning. The daring of the suggestion held them tongue-tied for a few moments.

"Surely we can sit a horse and point a pistol as well as the best of them," urged Warren.

"No wonder they call you Mad Jack!" exclaimed Somers. "But, by George!—it's a glorious scheme!"

"Grand!" ejaculated Bob Maxwell.

"We should have to let Sir John's servants into the secret," observed cautious Will Clinton.

"Or they might put an ounce of lead into one of us, eh?" laughed Somers.

"I could manage that part easily," put in Bob Maxwell. "The men would enter into the joke as gladly as we should."

"Of course, they'd have to blaze away at us," said Warren, "or the thing would look suspicious."

"There need be no bullets in the pistols," said Clinton.

"Anyhow, I'll make one for it," shouted Maxwell eagerly.

"Hush!" warned Clinton, frowning meaningly.

"Eh? What's amiss?" asked Warren.

"Black Whiskers!" whispered Clinton.

All glanced covertly at the dark stranger who sat apart. He was gazing at the low ceiling, smoking placidly.

"Certain he was listening," whispered Clinton.

"Wants his ears cropped," muttered Maxwell aloud.

"If anyone blows upon our game, we lose our sport," pointed out Clinton.

Will Clinton's last remark, and something in the look of the dark stranger, caused the young men to draw together and talk over their plans in a minor key.

It did not take them long to settle the details of their plot. After another fifteen minutes' discussion the young gentlemen donned their cloaks, turned up their collars, and sauntered out into the snow.

No sooner had they departed than the dark man rose and strolled to the window. He looked out at the storm for some time in an absent manner.

Then the door of the hostelry swung open to admit the portly figure of Reuben Leffer—goldsmith, pawnbroker, money-lender, and alderman of the town of Cotsby.

Mine host greeted the new comer as his importance deserved. Leffer threw back his coat, shaking the snow from his shoulders, and glanced superciliously round the room. The landlord saw him start slightly and change colour.

"My horse had better be put under cover," he observed, turning back to the door.

He caught mine host's eye as he spoke. Something in his manner drew the landlord to the door also.

"I thought you came on foot, Mr. Leffer," said Boniface, glancing at the alderman's boots.

"Hush!" whispered Leffer, hoarsely. "Who's the fellow in the great-coat yonder? No! don't look, for—"

"The dark man?" murmured the landlord, taken aback by his manner. "I don't know him."

"I do—worse luck!" hissed Leffer.

"I hope he is all right, sir?" queried mine host, alarmed.

"Right for the gallows," sniffed Leffer. "That is the man who stopped me on Roxton Heath last summer."

"Gracious!"

"Hush, for your life! It is he, I am certain."

"Black Davis?" breathed the landlord, shuddering.

"Black Davis, as sure as I'm an alderman. But we'll nail him. Listen. Slip round and out at the back, tell your ostler to ride like mad to Cotsby. There is a party of Bow Street runners there. They are scouring the county for this same scoundrel, and here he is under their very noses."

They strolled back into the room, chatting gaily, but the landlord was deathly pale, and Leffer's brows drew together in an ugly frown.

For ten minutes Alderman Leffer sipped his wine. The dark stranger paced up and down, smoking placidly, occasionally glancing out of the window, as though expecting someone.

Suddenly the door opened, and three heavily

built men slouched negligently in. They were growling at the weather, but their fox-like eyes swept sharply round the entire room.

The landlord dropped a flagon of ale in his agitation; the alderman started to his feet. The dark stranger turned his head as the new comers entered, but continued to pace towards the windows.

The three men glanced at each other, called for a mug of beer, and lounged towards the window also, each man with his right hand in his breast pocket.

Nearer they got to the dark stranger—four yards—three—two. Then the latter turned sharply. There was a flash, a report, a cloud of smoke! A couple of jugs fell shattered to the floor.

The three men sprang forward through the smoke, pistols in hand, then a yell of fury broke from all.

The stranger had vanished. Before them was an open window, through which the snow was beating in.

"To the door! After him! Stop him!" they bawled, and dashed out into the night again in pursuit. Their cries gradually died away in the distance.

"Fools!" hissed Alderman Leffer, furiously. "They have let him escape. Cotsby Wood is across yonder. He will be a match for ten of such idiots there."

CHAPTER II

STOPPED ON THE MOOR

THE following evening was foggy, with a threat of more snow. The lights of Cotsby looked blurred and dim as Sir John's coach rattled down the main street towards the moor. Soon every light was left behind, and the snow-covered bushes that lined the highway flew past like ghosts in the gloom.

The coach was well filled. Six substantial worthies were packed inside; on the box sat stout Sam Gibbons, the coachman, with Mike Farran on one side and Tom Royce on the other.

As the three splendid horses galloped sturdily along, sometimes knee-deep in snow, many a sly jest passed between the servants on the box at the expense of the unsuspecting gentlemen who rode inside.

"I wonder when Master Bob'll drop on us!" laughed Tom.

"Just beyond the brook, I suggested," said Sam.

"Fancy Black Davis hanging about this part again," broke in Mike. "He's got a nerve."

"Think it was him at the 'Red Eagle'?"

"So they tell me."

"Whether it was or not," observed Sam, sagely, "that story will do no harm to our game. They'll take Bob Maxwell for Black Davis. Oho! I wish it would begin."

Just at that moment they raced past the lighted windows of the "Red Eagle," and the sight brought a memory to at least one of the occupants of the coach.

"We ought to have armed ourselves for this journey," observed Alderman Leffer.

"Disgraceful affair, that at the 'Red Eagle,'" said the mayor. "The scamp was in their clutches, so to speak, and they let him slip away."

"There's one thing," remarked Sprock, the butcher, "that fright has probably scared him a hundred miles away."

"There are three stout fellows on the box," said Leffer. "I saw that they were armed."

"It will be a—— Hallo! We are stopping!" cried Sprock.

Jolt, jolt, jolt. The coach swung about and stopped.

"We are off the road!" cried Leffer, looking out.

Bang! bang! bang! Three shots rang out in quick succession. Angry voices were heard outside. The occupants of the coach looked at each other in dismay.

Alderman Leffer put his head out of the window, then drew back sharply with a gasp. The next instant a man's masked face appeared at the window, and also a man's hand which pointed a huge pistol straight at the mayor.

"Out with your money, like the gentlemen you are!" said a half bantering, half menacing voice.

"Footpads!" ejaculated the mayor, shrinking away.

"Gentlemen of the road, if you please!" said the man at the door flippantly.

Bang! bang! rang out again.

"Shoot that coachman dead if he moves another finger," cried the highwayman to someone. "Come! Sharp's the word. Purses, or I fire!"

The mayor flung his purse at the robber. Growling deeply and savagely, the others were forced to do likewise.

"Watches, please!" demanded the robber, pocketing the purses. Then someone ran up

and pulled him aside, pointing down the road and whispering urgently.

"Wouldn't you just like to be inside?" whispered Mike to Sam, as the three servants listened hard for all that passed.

"Which is Master Bob?" asked Tom. "I can't spot him."

"There are only three here," said Sam. "There were to be four. Perhaps he's got some other wheeze on."

Meanwhile Alderman Leffer was cautiously peeping out of the window.

"Quick! Now is our time!" he whispered, urgently. "Two of them have run up the road, there's only one at the horse's head. I'm going to dash for Titton Woods!"

Flinging open the opposite door, the alderman sprang out.

"Ha! Stand, or I fire!" cried the third robber, rushing up, pistol in hand.

Leffer ran on. Out tumbled the mayor, then the butcher.

Bang! went the pistol. Then Sprock's heavy fist caught the highwayman full in the face, and down he went in the snow.

Out rushed the others. One tripped and fell across the prostrate body of the robber, knocking the wind out of him.

"Oho! this beats cock-fighting!" guffawed Tom Royce, forgetting himself as he saw them fighting in the snow.

The mayor looked back in astonishment at the three servants on the box. They were manifestly enjoying the scene. A fearful suspicion entered his mind. These fellows were in league with the highwaymen!

That thought sent them all six ploughing their way across a snow-covered field. The fog and gloom swallowed them up before the highwaymen got together again.

"Cheated, by thunder!" growled the leader of the gang when he saw what had happened. "I could have sworn I heard a horn, too. Never mind, we have their purses. See what else there is in the coach!"

"My word! What a row there'll be at the Hall presently," tittered Mike Farran. "Hallo! what are they up to in the coach? Save us! Look!"

His laughing voice had changed instantly. He was pointing at the leading highwayman. The latter's mask had slipped down.

"Stand, or I fire!" cried the highwayman. But Sprock's heavy fist caught him full in the face, and down he went in the snow.

"That's not——" began Tom, but Mike clapped his hand over his mouth.

"Black Davis!" breathed Sam, in a dreadful whisper.

For a few moments they were too stunned for action. The shock was a terrible one. Then down leant the coachman and whispered:

"Quick! Cut the traces quietly and ride for life!"

"What's that?" cried Black Davis, a minute later. And he leapt out of the coach just in time to see the three servants spring on the freed horses and dash away.

He drew a pistol and fired, but the riders were well out of range. A savage growl escaped him.

"The fools have spotted us!" he cried. "Hurry up, or we shall have all the——Hark!"

The three men stood in the road listening, staring through the fog in the direction opposite to that taken by the servants.

"Horsemen!" gasped one.

"Three!" cried another.

Three shadowy shapes loomed into view down the road.

"To horse!" cried Black Davis.

All three burst through the hedge and ran to where their horses stood tethered. The next moment three cloaked horsemen rode up to the deserted coach.

They stared at it in wonderment for a second or two, rode round it and peered inside.

"Deserted!" ejaculated one.

"The traces cut!" exclaimed another.

"Pillaged!" groaned a third. "We are too late!"

"No! Look yonder!" cried one, who appeared to be the leader. "After them! Spread out!"

He had caught sight of three men urging their horses across a meadow. Leaping his horse over the hedge, he led his men after them in hot pursuit.

Once more Sir John's coach was left derelict on the highway. Westward, the six worthies of Cotsby were making for Titton Wood; eastward, the highwaymen were fleeing for life, with three Bow Street runners in hot pursuit; southward, three servants were riding their hardest to rouse the inmates of the Hall.

CHAPTER III

A FIASCO AND A DISCOVERY

FIVE minutes passed, then the sound of a coach-horn could have been heard in the direction of Cotsby had there been anyone in Sir John's coach to hear it. A few minutes later the London mail coach rolled into view.

"Hi!" shouted the driver, catching sight of the obstacle in the road. A loud blast came from the guard's horn.

"Broken down?" queried the guard.

"No hosses!" ejaculated the driver, peering through the mist as he slowed down. "There's room to pass."

He swerved aside to go round the obstruction. The eyes of coachman, guard, and the two outside passengers stared wonderingly at the deserted vehicle. Then a sharp exclamation escaped the first-named, and he began to whip up his horses furiously.

The off-wheels had left the road and were sliding down a bank. The treacherous snow had deceived the coachman.

Shout how he would, strain as the gallant horses might, over lurched the great coach, the hind wheel crumpled up, and the next moment the body of the vehicle lay broadside across a hedge.

The driver picked himself up out of the snow and ran to the horses' heads. The outside passengers and the guard crawled out of a snowdrift and gazed at the broken wheel in dismay.

Then the coach window was opened, and out came the angry face of a man, and an angrier voice demanded what they were up to.

The guard explained the situation, deferentially addressing the inside passenger as "Capting." The latter clambered out of the interior and looked round to see what could be done.

All five of them were soon congregated round Sir John's coach, and great was the excitement when first one and then the other pointed out the evidences of tragedy.

"Dark work, here!" said the captain. "Mysterious affair. Sooner we get on the road again the better. That wheel of ours is past mending. Better hitch the horses to this other one, transfer the mails and luggage, and make for the next town with all speed."

The suggestion suited all parties. With feverish energy all worked for ten strenuous minutes; by that time the contents of the mail coach had been stowed away in Sir John's coach, the mail horses hitched to it, and all was ready for a restart.

The three passengers wedged themselves in among the luggage, coachman and guard mounted the box, and away they went again.

For a mile the horses thudded across the bleak moor. Then a solitary horseman leapt

into the road a few yards ahead, followed a few seconds later by three others. One seized the head of the foremost horse, another sprang from his saddle, levelled a pistol at the open window of the coach and shouted :—

"Your money or your lives!"

Bang!—went the guard's pistol, and the cocked hat of the man who held the horses was jerked sharply from his head, the man springing back with a sharp cry.

Then out of the coach window shot a muscular hand, gripping the menacing pistol. The weapon was wrested from the highwayman's hand and fired point-blank at his head, but he jumped aside unhurt.

Bang! bang!—rang out from the box again, and bullets whistled through the air. The highwaymen looked taken aback by this vigorous resistance.

"Back, you fellows!" cried a hoarse voice on the other side.

Bang!—another bullet sang its way through the air.

"Hear that!" gasped one robber, drawing another away: "Something's wrong! Sam's not on the box."

One, who appeared to be leader, uttered a whistle. The four assailants sprang into their saddles and leapt the hedge in retreat. The guard fired a parting shot after them, and this shot took effect. One horse fell. Before the rider could extricate himself, the captain had jumped from the coach, burst through the hedge, and felled the highwayman senseless by a blow from the butt of the pistol he had so deftly captured.

"The others are well away," said the captain, regretfully. "Tie this fellow up, hoist him to the roof of the coach, and make him fast there."

This was speedily done, and the coach was soon in motion again. The victory over the highwaymen, and especially the capture of one of them, filled them all with delight.

They were not fated to travel in peace for long. The wind had sprung up, and the fog was driven about in patches. Suddenly out of one of these banks of fog came a cloud of horsemen, galloping their hardest. They swerved to one side, as though to pass the coach. The foremost horseman, however, suddenly swung round in his saddle and shouted :—

"Hi! there—stop! Stop that coach!"

Instantly the horsemen behind barred the road, and the coach came to a stand with a jolt.

"Who are you, to stop the King's mail!" demanded the guard.

The horses thudded across the bleak moor. Then suddenly a solitary horseman leapt into the road a few yards ahead.

"I am Sir John Maxwell," returned the leading horseman. "And you are not driving the King's mail!"

"Whoever you are," cried the captain, bursting out of the coach, "this is His Majesty's mail. Stand aside or it will be worse for you. I am Captain Wardraw, of the 10th."

"Glad to meet you, captain," said Sir John, raising his hat. "But your threat is ill-timed. That is my coach. Six of my friends were travelling in it to-night, when they were attacked by three highwaymen near Titton Wood. The servants cut the traces, rode to the Hall, and I have come out at the head of a party to rescue my stranded friends."

The captain looked up at the coachman.

"Seen nothin' o' your friends, sir," said that worthy. "We found this coach deserted in the road. In trying to pass it we overturned and our wheel broke. We shifted into here and came along."

"Oho! That's it, eh?" exclaimed Sir John. "Seen anything of the highwaymen?"

"That we did!" chortled the driver. "A mile after we changed coaches four of 'em set on us, but we beat 'em off. Thanks to the capting there, one of 'em's on the roof here."

"A prisoner?" cried Sir John, amid great excitement. "Let's look at him. Here, Sam, Tom, see if you recognise this scamp."

The prisoner was bundled off the roof with little ceremony and set up on his feet. He looked white, ill, dazed, and could hardly stand. A gasp escaped the horsemen as they saw his face. Sir John leapt down in consternation.

"Bob!" he cried, staring at the prisoner in horror. "*Bob!* What on earth means this?"

"You know the prisoner?" demanded the captain, sharply.

"Know him!" gasped the other. "This is Bob Maxwell—my nephew!"

CHAPTER IV

THE LAST OF BLACK DAVIS

IT is impossible to describe the sensation which was made by the discovery of the identity of the captured highwayman.

The hapless Bob Maxwell had to make a clean breast of it. He detailed the little plot they had hatched in the "Red Eagle" on the previous evening. Sam, Tom, and Mike were called up and examined as to their share in the night's proceedings. As they got the story the right way up, Sir John became very grave. Captain Wardraw, however, laughed more than once.

"I see what it is," he cried at length. "The real Black Davis overheard the plans of these young scapegraces, and decided to anticipate them by a scheme of his own. His scheme succeeded. When these youngsters met the coach, however, it did not contain the people they expected. What a shock for them! I thought they levanted rather abruptly when the bullets began to whistle through the air."

"This is a terrible business, captain," observed Sir John.

"Nonsense, my dear sir," rejoined the soldier. "Get that young scamp between the sheets as soon as you can, and he will be all right to-morrow. Take half these horsemen and search Titton Wood for your guests; lend me a horse and a weapon, and I shall be delighted to join in a hunt for the real culprits at the head of the other half."

The captain's offer was gladly accepted. Sir John placed his coach at the service of the mail for as long as necessary, and handed both driver and guard a handsome present. Sam was ordered to convey the injured Bob to the Hall, and away rode Sir John and half a dozen others towards Titton Wood to search for the Cotsby worthies.

Ten armed horsemen followed the captain to the scene of Black Davis's attack. His practised eye soon picked up the horsemen's trail, but, after following it for some distance, he remarked to those around him:—

"Three highwaymen, they said, but here are the traces of five or six. Look to your weapons, gentlemen!"

They followed the well-marked trail over the snow for half an hour or more; then the captain signalled a halt. His keen eye had detected a group of horses beneath a huge tree.

He and another rode forward to reconnoitre. They swept round in a circle, gradually closing in on the horses. The latter were there, right enough, but there was no sign of their riders.

Captain Wardraw dismounted, found a trail of footmarks leading from the animals, and followed it up warily, weapon in hand.

Suddenly he came upon a dark figure lying full length in the snow. The man sprang up instantly.

"Surrender, in the King's name!" cried the captain, taking cover.

"Eh? The same to you!" retorted the other.

"I am Captain Wardraw," said that gentleman. "Who are you?"

"Richard Copham, of Bow Street," returned the man.

"Oho!" exclaimed the captain. "You are after Black Davis; so are we."

A sharp consultation followed. The Bow Street men had located the highwaymen in a little wood. They had posted themselves around it and waited patiently for an hour for the appearance of the gang. Captain Wardraw at once offered to sweep the wood from end to end, and it did not take him long to make his arrangements.

The three thief-takers took positions in hiding on one side, the bulk of the captain's party worked through in a line from the opposite side. Wardraw himself sat on horseback directing operations.

Calling to each other in hunting jargon, the beaters plunged into the wood. For a few minutes their cries rose unceasingly and nothing else was heard. Then two shots rang out sharply, the hunters seemed to concentrate on one spot, and shots rang out thick and fast.

A man ran breathlessly up to the captain.

"Got two!" he panted. "The other has made across yonder towards the horses."

The captain was off like an arrow across the snow. Far ahead he could see a dark figure racing wildly. Urging his horse forward, the captain got within twenty yards. Then the flying robber reached the horses, sprang upon the first and rode away.

Then up rose in his front a long line of enemies, pressing forward. The highwayman turned sharply and rode at the captain fiercely, a pistol in each hand. The soldier swerved aside and raised his weapon.

Bang! bang!—went the robber's pistols. The captain's horse fell upon his knees, throwing his rider into the snow. Forward dashed the highwayman, with a clear road of escape.

The captain, lying on the ground, swung round and fired up at him as he passed. The bullet grazed the horse and hit the man. The animal sprang aside sharply, and his rider pitched head-foremost into the snow.

Half a dozen sprang forward, but he never rose. They turned him over and recognised the dark hair and whiskers of Black Davis, who would never trouble the King's highway again.

Photo [W. Reid

"A SECRET SWEETNESS IN THE STREAM"—A Christmas Scene on the Teith, Perthshire.

How to Kick a Rugby Ball

By H. ALEXANDER
(ENGLISH INTERNATIONAL)

Fig. 1.—The right way to hold the ball for a punt.

Fig. 2.—The correct position of the ball at the moment of kicking.

ONE sometimes hears the opinion expressed that Rugby football is a question of brute force and brute force only.

I am going to try to show that there is more in Rugger than meets the eye, and a good deal more to be learnt than most people realise, and, as a limited space prohibits my dealing with the whole game in one article, I have chosen here the "knack of kicking" for several reasons.

First, kicking is a very important branch of the game, perhaps the most important, and yet the one most neglected. To begin with, a good kick will turn the value of a try from three points to five; will profit by a gross breach of the rules on the part of an opponent to the extent of three points; and a drop-kick passing over the bar, technically known as a field-goal, from anywhere in the field of play, counts four points.

Secondly, nothing helps a set of forwards more than good kicking into touch by their backs; by one kick they may easily gain fifty yards, which would have entailed hard-fought scrums and determined rushes to win without its aid. There is, in addition, the moral effect, so important a factor in every game.

Thirdly, kicking can be learnt by almost anyone. It is a most fascinating thing to practise, and the least sanguine are often surprised at the rapid progress they make in the art. In giving this third reason I may claim to speak advisedly, for I have had a good deal of experience in coaching schoolboys, and I have found that fellows who seemed to me at the outset to be utterly hopeless have in the course of a month or two developed into kickers of much more than average merit.

Let us consider the punt first of all, because it is used many more times in a game than any other kind of kick; and, before we examine in detail how it should be done, we may give a rough idea of *when* it should be done.

Experience alone can teach a man just when to kick and when to pass or run, but it may be taken as a general rule that it is always advisable to kick when there is a good chance of the pass being intercepted or of the man who receives it being instantly smothered. In the one case an indefinite amount of ground will be gained, and in the other probably some lost.

In Fig. 1 we have the ball held in readiness for a punt. What are the points to notice? First of all, the angle at which the ball is held. It is as nearly as possible the exact position in which the ball should be at the moment of impact. It will be noticed that it is held towards the end nearest the body firmly in both hands; the arms are stretched as straight out as possible, and the ball is held low down.

In the rush and hurry of the game there is not always time to do things in the apparently leisurely way depicted here, but when from practice this position becomes almost second nature it is surprising how quickly one seems instinctively to put the ball into it after a catch. The importance of this position may seem exaggerated, and, regarded by itself, perhaps it is, but it has a real object and that is this: A Rugby ball, as all the world knows, is not round, but egg-shaped, and it would be strange indeed if it mattered nothing whether the point or long side or broad side is kicked. It does matter a great deal, and Fig. 2 shows the position in which the ball should be when the foot meets it. It would be a very difficult business, in fact, impossible, for anyone but a skilled juggler to throw an egg-shaped ball into the air and make it come down every time as the illustration shows; therefore by looking again at Fig. 1 we see that the ball, so far from being thrown into the air, is as nearly as possible placed on the foot, and this accounts for the position of the arms and the stoop of the body.

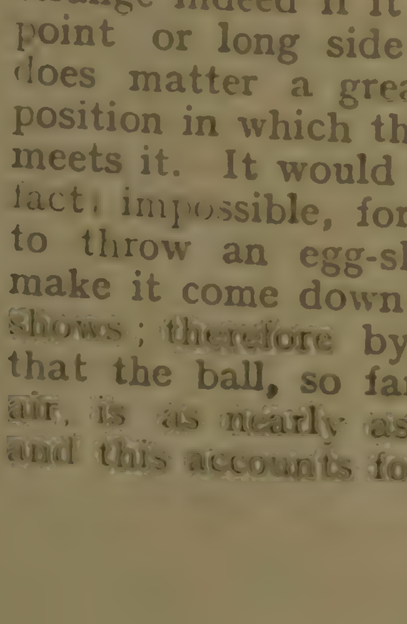


Fig. 3.—The finish of the kick.

Now comes the moment of the actual kick, and in Fig. 2 there are one or two points to notice. The toe is pointed well down in order to make as long a flat surface of the foot as possible to meet the ball; the right knee is straight and stiff, not bent, and the eye is fixed on the ball. Fig. 3 shows the finish of the kick. By comparing Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 it will be seen that the power is obtained by a long straight swing of the leg—a kind of leg-drive—while the left foot is firmly planted on the ground so as to make the whole posture solid and steady; quite the

Fig. 4.—The way *not* to punt.

reverse of the bent knee and spring into the air which one sometimes sees.

I dare say someone will say: "Yes, this is all very well, but where do the advantages of it all come in in actual practice?" Well the things to be aimed at are—accuracy of direction, accuracy of height and length, and I think it will be clear that the ball practically put on the foot in a certain position, the run taken directly in the line in which the ball is intended to go, and the straight leg-drive will all tend to procure the first.

The fact of the toe being kept well down will do a great deal for number two; and correct timing, and the power inherent in a kick delivered with all the weight and strength of the thigh as against a flick from the knee must give length.

But the most interesting point about this way of punting is the flight of the ball through the air. Instead of turning over and over and keeping straight on its course, it will fly in the position shown in Fig. 3 the whole way and will swing from side to side in a most extraordinary manner. It is a little difficult to explain this phenomenon to anyone who has never seen it, but so peculiar is the course the ball takes, first swinging to one side and then the other, now dropping a little and now rising again, that I have often seen players with good eyes and safe hands, who would scorn the idea of not being able to catch a long kick, find themselves at the last moment several yards away from the ball owing to one of these weird plunges. When one thinks of what a glorious chance a catch missed in this way by an opponent gives, it makes this kind of punting the more worth striving after.

Fig. 5.—A useful emergency kick.

One glance at Fig. 4 is enough to tell you that this is the way not to punt; the ball thrown high into the air, descending anyhow, the kick probably going to be too early, and no possibility of predicting where the ball will go to.

Fig. 5 is interesting in that it shows very well one of the ways resorted to on occasions to get out of a tight corner. We will suppose that a player has to pick up the ball when it is rolling in the direction of his own goal, some of the other side are close upon him, and he has no time to turn round and get in his kick in the orthodox manner, so he kicks it backwards over his own head. Notice the body thrown back, the toe bent up instead of turned down, and the leg swung up as far as it will go.

The next illustration, Fig. 6, shows a drop-kick at the instant when the foot reaches the ball, while its neighbour, Fig. 7, shows the same thing minus all precision. It will be observed that in the former of these two the ball is kicked the instant it leaves the ground; and this is very important. It is the nature of a drop-kick for the ball to be kicked after it has bounced from the ground; it also often seems to be the nature of the beast for the ball to bounce too soon, so that the common difficulty is to be just in time with the foot, and not too late.

From the angle at which we see the ball leaving the foot in Fig. 6 we may reckon that the way to hold the ball preliminary to the kick is much

Fig. 6.—The right drop-kick. The ball should be kicked the very instant it leaves the ground.

Fig. 7.—A drop-kick that lacks all precision.

the same as for a punt, shown in Fig. 1, with this slight difference, that in the present case the ball ought to be pointed a little more downwards. The rest of the kick is very similar, except that the body is kept more over the ball, with the result that the leg will hardly be so high at the finish.

It must strike anyone who looks in a newspaper on a Monday morning at the list of results that the number of unconverted tries is remarkably well ahead of the number of converted ones, and if he looks at the individual results carefully, he will further see that a fair number of defeats might have been turned into wins if the losing side had had in their ranks a reliable place-kicker. It would be idle to pretend that anyone, however good a performer, can be certain of kicking a goal from any angle, for the difficulties of wind and distance often want a lot of negotiating; still, I have frequently seen the kicker fail straight in front of goal in first-class matches, and it has always struck me that this is unnecessary—in fact, that with care, and a little study of the art, success ought to be a moral certainty from anywhere within half-way between the post and the corner flag.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty one can have to contend with is mud—real slippery mud, and plenty of it. So much depends, speaking of a

right-footed kicker, on the exact spot in which the left foot is placed, and the firmness of the stand. Fig. 8 shows the correct position of the left foot; that is, close enough to the ball to allow the toe to strike it just above the ground, but not close enough for it to dig underneath the ball, and, by skying it, deprive the kick of all length.

Fig. 9 shows the opposite error, that of planting the left foot too far from the ball; it is clear that it will be topped as a result, and in this photograph the kicker is purposely taken looking up towards the goal. A football seems such a big thing that one is apt to feel that having once taken a good look at it, there is no possibility of failing to kick it. Quite so; but the football has not only to be kicked, but kicked precisely in one spot not larger than a half-crown, and that spot is small enough to be fairly easily missed, so that it is really very necessary to keep the eye riveted on it.

Now one of the first things to realise is that the distance the ball will travel does not increase in proportion to the length of the run taken before the kick. A certain amount of initial impetus is necessary, but length mainly depends on the force being applied accurately at the last moment.

It is surprising how far the ball will travel when kicked plumb on the right spot, with a minimum of force behind it. It gives one much the same sensation as it leaves the foot as a clean-hit short-approach shot leaving a golf club; there is something delightfully crisp about the sort of ping with which the ball starts on its journey. Considering once more the position of the left foot, it is quite certain that the longer or more violent the run taken, the more uncertain will be the placing of the pivot-foot in the exact place required.

It will be found that a run of five or six yards is enough under any circumstances, and of that the first two or three steps may be walked.

The second point in which the greatest care is needed is the placing of the ball, and without good placing the kicker cannot hope for success.

On first thoughts it would appear a very simple matter to hold a ball as directed, and then to put it on the ground, but when we remember that a mistake of half an inch in the placing would be magnified into one of many feet at a distance of twenty or thirty yards we can see that the placer's job is not a particularly easy one.

In Fig 10. everything is wrong and conducive to failure. The placer must be unsteady in such a position; his near hand is under the ball, so that when he comes to put it down some change is very likely to occur as he removes his hand; he is looking at the kicker, trying to follow his directions in that way instead of keeping his attention fixed on the ball alone; lastly, he is on the wrong side of the ball. As the kicker follows through after his kick, the placer will be in his way and will be very liable to baulk him in any case. The ball, too, is leaning in the wrong direction, and the kick can be little better than a scoop with it thus. Just as in the punt and drop, it is very important to run in the same line as that in which the ball is to fly, while here we have a kind of cross-hook which is not uncommonly practised.

Fig. 8.—The correct position of the feet for the place kick.

Fig. 9.—Incorrect position of the left foot, which is too far behind.

If we now compare this with Fig. 11, we shall see everything changed. The ball is not touching the ground, but it is as near as it can go without actually doing so, and there is a general look of steadiness about the whole thing which would inspire the most punctilious kicker with confidence.

It is a very good plan to have some word such as "Down" agreed upon beforehand between the kicker and placer, and for the latter to understand that he is under no circumstances to put the ball on the ground until he hears the signal "Down." I have myself experienced the pain and grief of seeing the placer plant the ball on the ground when I was only walking up to alter the position, and I am sure that a great many others have found themselves in the same quandary. Or it may be that as the kicker runs up he sees some of the defending side already charging out, which is not allowed till the ball is on the ground; naturally he wishes to stop and call on the referee to allow "no charge," but finds his placer has deprived him of this right. These may seem very unimportant details, but they are just the little points of care the neglect of which is responsible for so many kicks going wide of the mark. It might appear almost superfluous to advise the kicker to see that the hole made in the ground to receive the ball is large enough, but not once nor twice have I seen the ball roll over after it has been placed, and many times more seen the placer obliged to keep his fingers on it till the last moment to prevent it from rolling over.

Fig. 10.—Very faulty position of the placer. The article will tell you how many mistakes he is making.

Fig. 11.—Perfect position of the placer.

The Tiger of Batol

A Story of Peril and Adventure in the China Seas.

By CAPT. RICHARD BENSON.

Synopsis

AUSTIN CHESNEY and Clive Denham, two old friends, meet in Plymouth, where they are enabled to render a signal service to Captain Heritage, who has a bag of pearls stolen from him by a Malay. The two boys, after an exciting chase, capture the thief, Kwala, and restore the pearls to Captain Heritage, who is exceedingly grateful.

The three encounter Terence O'Rourke, who has served before under Captain Heritage. The captain then tells them that he is about to set out on a great adventure, and invites them all to accompany him. He has fitted out the schooner *Brilliant* for a voyage to Sunshine Island, which he has leased from the Japanese Government for two years. He has good reason to believe that at Sunshine Island there is a pearl lagoon of enormous wealth, and he is determined to make nearly a million of money in order that he may restore to the British Government a vessel equal to the *Scylla*, which ship foundered when under his command, though through no fault of his.

Terence O'Rourke and the boys willingly join the expedition, and the *Brilliant* sets out for the East. They have nearly reached their destination when the *Brilliant* is attacked by an enormous pirate junk. In a fight at close quarters the bows of the junk strike the *Brilliant* on the starboard side, and the rascally pirate crew leap to the schooner's deck. Armed with kreeses they rush upon Captain Heritage and his allies.

CHAPTER VI

HOW THE BIG JUNK CAUGHT A TARTAR

IT was no twentieth century, long range fight, but a hand-to-hand battle like one of those which Marryat describes.

The *Brilliant's* men had cutlasses, and as most were old man-of-war's men they knew how to use them. For the most part they fought silent, and the only sounds were the clash of steel on steel, the beat of bare feet on deck, the panting breath of the combatants, and now and then a shriek of agony as one of the invaders went down beneath a crashing blow from a muscular British arm.

Fierce and active as were the pirates, and although they outnumbered the *Brilliant's* men four to three, yet the issue was never for a moment in doubt. Raging at the abominable treachery of the pirates, each white man fought like two, and in less than five minutes it was all over.

Nine of the pirates lay upon the deck; the rest, panic-stricken, flung themselves overboard, and their shaven, pig-tailed heads were seen bobbing among the waves as they swam desperately towards the junk.

The junk was now more than half a mile astern. The obstruction in the oil-pipe had suddenly come away, and Clive had got his engine going full blast, so that the schooner, with her sails drawing and her screw running at its best, was flying along at something like ten knots.

"Will I get her round, captain?", cried

O'Rourke, who stood with flushed face and dripping cutlass. "Ye won't let the spalpeens escape. Sure we'll sink her in two twos."

Heritage glanced at the junk. She was perceptibly lower in the water. Her main mast, cut by Austin's last shot, was trailing over her side.

"We don't need to trouble about her," he said quietly. "Keep the schooner on her course. Tell Denham to stop the engines. Chesney, see that the decks are cleared, and report how many of our men are wounded."

He hurried back to the bridge after giving these orders, and Austin set about carrying out his share of them.

Of the nine pirates on deck, eight were stone dead, and the bodies were at once got rid of by flinging them overboard.

The ninth, however, was apparently only stunned by a glancing cut over the scalp. Austin ordered him to be taken below.

Of the *Brilliant's* men no one was killed, but no fewer than five were wounded. Austin, whose experience in his father's mine had given him useful training in first aid, got out bandages and antiseptics, and himself saw to the wounds. Only one man was severely hurt; the others would all be on duty again in a day or two.

"Sure, we're well out of that!" said O'Rourke cheerily, as Austin came down into the cabin to dinner. "Thim Black Flags is the curse of these seas."

"What are Black Flags?" asked Austin.

"Sure, it's just a name for Chinese pirates."

"I thought pirates were an extinct breed."

"There's plump people wid frock coats and shiny hats walking in London city that thinks so. Begorra, but I'd like to set thim all cruising up and down the Eastern Ocean. I'm thinking they'd change their minds mighty quick."

As they talked Clive came quickly in.

"I say, Austin, have you seen the prisoner?" he exclaimed eagerly.

"I saw him," replied Austin, "and I told them to take him below, put a bandage on his cracked poll, and lock him up safely."

"You didn't recognise him?"

"Recognise him?" repeated Austin wonderingly. "Why, I wasn't aware I had any pals among that yellow-hided outfit of cutthroats. Anyhow, his face was so covered with blood that his own mother wouldn't have known him."

"Ah, that explains it," said Clive. "But now that he's clean you'd spot him in a jiffy. It's our old friend Kwala."

Austin and O'Rourke both stared at Clive in amazement.

"Impossible!" burst out Austin. "We left the Malay at Plymouth less than two months ago."

"Can't help that. It's Kwala right enough."

"'Tis not impossible," put in O'Rourke. "If the little thafe had shipped on wan of thim big liners he would have rached Hong Kong a couple of weeks ago. And thin he might have joined the big junk the very next day."

"I'm going to see, the very minute I've finished my grub," said Austin, as he helped himself to a liberal plateful of apple tart.

"So am I," said Captain Heritage, who had come in while they were talking.

As soon as the meal was over he and Austin went forward to the sick bay, where the Malay was lying in a hammock. There was no risk of his doing mischief, for a sturdy A.B. was in charge.

As his two visitors appeared the Malay turned his head and saw them, and a queer flicker came into his deep-set eyes as they rested on Austin.

It was gone as soon as it had come, and then, as if a veil had been drawn over it, all expression vanished from his brown face.

"It's Kwala right enough," said Austin, staring hard at the evil-looking little ruffian. "You talk to him, sir."

Heritage stepped forward to the side of the hammock and began sternly to question the Malay in his own curious, hissing language.

Austin, who, of course, could not understand a word, stood by.

The Malay answered readily enough, and seemed to be speaking humbly, even imploringly.

Presently Heritage took Austin by the arm and led him out and back down the gangway to the cabin.

"I wouldn't talk to you before him," he said, "for I've a notion he knows more English than he lets on. A fellow like that, who's been in the stokehold of big steamers, can generally understand English."

"But what did he say, sir?"

"It's as O'Rourke suggested. He shipped for Hong Kong in the *Orion*, got there nearly three weeks ago, and then, according to his own account, joined the junk to reach Satow, where he expected to get another ship."

"'Tis a lie, sorr," said O'Rourke sharply.

"Very probably. But he went on to say

that he never before had anything to do with the Black Flag, and doesn't want to."

"The divvle was ill, the divvle a saint would be," quoted O'Rourke.

"Quite so, but listen. He vows that he recognised the *Brilliant* as my ship, knew she was armed, but did not tell Loo Ching, the pirate skipper, because he wanted to escape, and that he jumped aboard to escape, not to fight us. He says he fell down at once, and that that was the reason he was the only one of the boarders who was not killed outright."

"And a mighty inganious story, too," said O'Rourke. "If I was you, captain, I'd just put him overboard before worse comes of it. The sooner thim sort is shark's meat the better for their fellow cratures."

"Don't talk nonsense," replied the skipper half laughing, half annoyed. "We shall have to keep him until we can hand him over to the proper authorities. See that he is well guarded, O'Rourke."

"I will, sorr," said the big Irishman, touching his forehead. But as he left the cabin, he added under his breath. "Throuble will come of it. Mark my words, throuble will come of it."

CHAPTER VII

HERITAGE TAKES THE TILLER

THE wind pulled round a trifle in the early afternoon, and the *Brilliant*, with half a gale a little aft the beam, went slashing along in fine style, sending up an unceasing fountain of iridescent foam under her shapely bows.

The first dog watch had just been set—in other words it was four in the afternoon—when the look-out shouted, "Land in sight," and a tiny black hump became visible against the blue horizon on the starboard bow.

At the pace at which the schooner was travelling she soon raised it, and it was seen to be a small island.

Austin, who had just come on deck, ran up to the bridge. "Is this Sunshine Island, sir?" he asked eagerly.

Captain Heritage shook his head. "No, Chesney. We've a long way to go still. That's Batol, and a very different island to Sunshine. Sunshine is a coral island, and lies quite low in the middle of a big lagoon; but that, you can see for yourself, is a big lump of land with tall cliffs all around. As a matter of fact, it's nothing but the top of a submerged mountain, and the water is a mile deep quite close to the shore."

Austin stared at the strange-looking island, and presently went below and fetched a pair of glasses.

By the aid of these he saw tall black cliffs rising sheer from sea level to a tremendous height.

"Anyone live there?" he asked.

"Not a soul. They say that a goat couldn't climb those sliffs."

"But there's smoke rising," said Austin sharply, a minute later. "I can see it plainly."

"Volcanic," replied the skipper. "An old *soufriere* or a hot spring."

The grim, black island with its wall-like cliffs fascinated Austin. He could not take his eyes off it. On the course the schooner was making it was plain that she would pass within a mile of this strange volcanic cone which looked so startlingly out of keeping with the soft blue sky and the waves that sparkled under the hot afternoon sun.

As the *Brilliant* drew closer Batol seemed to rise higher and higher, and its gigantic cliffs to acquire a more and more forbidding aspect. Soon they were close enough for the glass to give a view of the white surf breaking in huge fountains of foam around the base of those iron cliffs and of the sea birds like withered leaves fluttering against the ink-black background.

Austin focussed his binoculars on the upper part of the island, but not a single green thing could he see. All was one desolation of jagged rocks and tumbled boulders, and high in the clear air above rose the plume of grey vapour which was caught by the strong breeze and carried away to windward.

Suddenly Austin gave a startled cry, which made Captain Heritage start sharply.

"There's somebody up there," he declared.

"Nonsense!" returned the captain a trifle impatiently.

"Take the glasses and look, sir. Just to the left of that tall black pinnacle on the top of the cliffs."

Heritage took the glasses. They were prismatic binoculars of great power, a present which he had made to Austin before starting.

But the focus which suited Austin was not right for the captain, and he had to adjust the screw.

He did so, and took a long steady stare.

At last he lowered the glasses, and turned

to Austin with a smile. "There's nothing there, Chesney."

"I saw three men," replied Austin decidedly.

"You must have fancied it. Look again."

Austin did so.

"They're gone now, sir. But I saw them plainly enough.

"They were probably birds."

"No, sir," replied Austin obstinately. "I know a man from a bird. I saw three men."

And this he stuck to in spite of a good deal of mild chaff from Heritage and O'Rourke. Clive was the only person who had any belief in him, and even Clive evidently had his doubts.

Before dark the gloomy heights of Batol were hull down, and with the breeze remaining steady the schooner flung the leagues behind her, and every hour was ten knots nearer to her destination.

Austin was on deck at earliest dawn, and climbed up into the cross-trees, with his glasses slung in their case over his shoulder.

A little after two bells in the morning watch he made out a tiny bluish speck lying dead ahead, and focussing his glasses upon it soon made sure that it was not a cloud but an island.

His loud hail of "Land ho!" brought half a dozen men tumbling up on deck, and in a very few minutes every soul of the ship's company, except those in the sick bay, were staring out across the sea at the faintly seen atom of land which was the object of their voyage.

For Heritage had made no secret of their destination. He was not the sort to sail under false colours. O'Rourke had picked his crew, and when each man was selected, had first made him understand the hazardous nature of the enterprise, and then promised him, in addition to his wages, a small share of the eventual profits. Small, but large enough, if all went well, to assure the man comfort and ease for the rest of his life.

By breakfast time the dot had grown till it had assumed definite proportions, and with his powerful glasses Austin could pick out the tops of the graceful palms which covered the atoll.

There was an air of suppressed excitement as the officers met in the after-cabin for breakfast, and Heritage's lean cheeks had an unusual touch of colour.

"Wid this breeze, we'll make it before four bells, captain," said O'Rourke.

"I only hope we shall find all well," said Heritage, with unusual earnestness. "Pagan will be glad to see us. You never met John Pagan, did you, O'Rourke?"

"No, sorr."

"I hope you'll like him."

"Begor, av he's the man ye cud lave in charge of a job like that, he's good enough for me, captain, avick."

A ghost of a smile crossed Heritage's face. It was plain the compliment pleased him.

Breakfast was hurried through, and all were on deck again in less than twenty minutes.

The *Brilliant* lay over to the strong breeze till at times her lee scuppers ran with a gush of green water. Sunshine Island had grown perceptibly. They could now see the line of white which marked the reef.

"Is it a good entrance, sorr?" asked O'Rourke, with his eyes on the rim of foam.

"Plenty of water, but desperately narrow," replied Heritage. "I shall take the wheel when we get a bit nearer."

The schooner seemed as anxious as her crew to reach her destination. She tore through the water like a steamer, flinging acres of foaming wake behind her shapely stern.

The island now showed itself as a long strip of milk-white sand crowned with the exquisite green of cocoa-nut palms and other tropical vegetation, and round it lay the wide lagoon, a huge mirror of intense blue barely ruffled by the strong breeze that drove the *Brilliant* at fully eleven knots.

Heritage walked forward, and took the wheel from burly Sam Coot, the bo'sun.

In front lay a long line of dark coloured rocks. In some places they rose to a height of six or seven feet above the sea, but in others they hardly showed above the tops of the great waves which broke upon them in ceaseless thunder.

The whole air was full of the never ending crash of the breaking water. Even in the calmest weather this sound does not cease, for the ground swell of the great Pacific never slumbers.

"What wicked-looking rocks!" said Clive, uncomfortably. "I don't see any opening at all."

"Trust the skipper," replied Austin, coolly. "He knows his way in."

For some distance the schooner swept on almost parallel with the reef. Then came a sharp order from Heritage.

"Down tops'ls."

And as the work was rapidly carried out, Heritage put the helm hard over, and coming round on the other tack with the speed and certainty of a racing canoe, the *Brilliant* drove straight into the line of crashing foam.

The boys were not the only ones aboard who held their breath as the fine little ship rushed towards what looked like certain destruction. They felt her rise bodily on top of a huge green wave crested with a mane of snowy foam.

Then, as she plunged forward, right under her bows there opened a passage through the reef, a passage so narrow that it looked, on the face of it, as though there was barely room for a whale-boat.

With a rush like that of a toboggan flying down an ice-clad hill-side, the schooner flashed towards the opening.

For a moment all was din of roaring waves and mist of flying spray. Then, as if by a miracle, they were out of the pandemonium and gliding on perfectly even keel across the lake-like surface of the wide lagoon.

"As pretty a bit of work as iver I saw," was O'Rourke's verdict. "Begor, but there's few stame-ship sailors could do that same bit of steering."

Suddenly Austin gave a startled cry. "There's somebody up there, Captain Heritage," he declared, pointing to the distant rock.

The boys hardly heard him. They had even forgotten the island for the moment. The wonders of the lagoon claimed all their attention.

"It's like floating in air!" gasped Clive, as he gazed over the rail into the limpid blue depths beneath.

"The fish look exactly like birds flying," answered Austin.

"What in the name of sense are those thundering great mushrooms?" demanded Clive.

"Sure, they're mushroom coral," explained O'Rourke, coming up. "'Tis the way some coral grows."

"Look out, we're going to run slap on to that one!" exclaimed Clive, in sudden alarm.

"Ye needn't worry," laughed O'Rourke. "If we dhrew as much as the *Dreadnought* herself, we'd not touch it. 'Tis the clearness of the water decaves ye."

Sure enough, the schooner passed clean over the strange-looking coral mushroom without harm, and presently Clive and Austin began to realise that the water was quite three times as deep as it looked to be.

Suddenly, from the clear green depths, there wabbled into sight a creature of such amazing appearance that Clive, who spotted it first, gripped Austin by the arm and pointed, speechless, at the monster.

"Suffering cats!" muttered Austin. "It looks like a dining-room carpet suddenly come alive."

"I never saw a carpet with eyes," said Clive.

"Nor with a long tail," added Austin. "What is it, O'Rourke?"

"A giant ray," answered the Irishman. "Devil-fish some calls thim, and, begor, they desarve the name, for there's not a nastier brute that swims. Faith, I'd a dale sooner tackle a shark than wan of thim gentry. 'Tis sorry I am to see him in the lagoon."

"Would he tackle a man?" asked Austin with interest.

"'Deed, and he would that! He's a flesh eater, like all his sort, and there's a nasty cunning about him which the shark hasn't got. D'ye see the sting on the tail of him?"

The great ray, which was nearly square in shape and at least fifteen feet across, swam slowly onwards, staring up at the ship with his great glassy green eyes, and with his long tail undulating slowly behind.

The tail was as long again as the fish, and through the glass-clear water both boys could plainly see the curious bony barb or spear near the end of it.

Clive shivered. "I hope I'll never see that brute again," he muttered.

"'Deed, and I hope so, too," said O'Rourke. "Or if ye do I hope ye'll be as safe as ye are this same minnit."

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN THE FISH STOPPED BITING

AS the *Brilliant* made her rush through the channel into the lagoon, a gig, manned by Kanakas, and with a white man in the stern sheets, had put off from the shore; and as the schooner reached her moorings the boat ran smartly alongside, and her steersman came scrambling over the rail on to the deck.

Heritage hurried forward. "I'm very glad to see you again, Pagan," he said, shaking hands warmly with the new comer.

Pagan, a big, square-shouldered man, with a hard, resolute face and close-cropped hair, returned his employer's grip with interest.

"You can't be as glad, sir, as we are to see you. And all the more that you've got a well-found ship and some guns," answered Pagan, glancing at the six-pounders.

"Why, what's up?" asked Heritage anxiously. "Have you been having trouble?"

"Nothing else, sir, ever since you left," returned Pagan grimly. "First, the Kanakas got measles, and that, as you know, is almost as bad as small-pox among these chaps. Three died, including Ramidar, my best diver. Then we got the tail end of a typhoon, which blew down the storehouse and played the mischief with the stores, and after that, just as we got to work again, we had a visit from a junk full of these Black Flag gentry."

"How did they get inside the lagoon?" demanded Heritage sharply. "I gave orders for the entrance to be mined while I was away, and the wires always ready in your hut."

"That's true, sir, and your orders were carried out; but as it happened I was down with a go of fever, and it was a pitch dark night. So the junk sneaked in before anyone was the wiser, and the next thing I knew was Sundra, the boat-steerer, shaking me by the shoulder and telling me there were two boat-loads of chinkies landing."

"You were in time?" said Heritage quickly.

"If I hadn't I shouldn't be here talking to you to-day. I sunk one boat with a couple of bullets from my big rifle. The others scrambled ashore, and we had as pretty a turn up as you'd wish to see."

"And beat them off?" asked Heritage, as the other paused.

"There weren't any left to beat off by the time we'd finished with them," was Pagan's grim reply. "But I lost two more of our own chaps, and that hasn't left me enough

to carry on. Still I've got a few more pearls, and if you'll come ashore, captain, I'll show them to you."

"You have done well, Pagan," said Heritage. "I'll come ashore later. But first we must break cargo, get out the portable huts and diving dresses. We've got a busy week before us."

What Heritage said was no more than true. For the next five days it was work from morning till night. The portable houses were landed and put together, a new storehouse was built (much more solid than the old one), and, by way of precaution in case of further attacks, a stockade of stout posts with six strands of barbed wire was erected all round the camp, and a deep ditch dug outside it.

Austin and Clive worked with the rest, and as each night fell were so dog-tired that they simply swallowed their supper, and, tumbling into their cots, slept like logs until réveillé the next morning.

Heritage ran everything on service lines, and discipline was strict. At the same time food was good and plentiful, and the men, with the prospect of fortune before them, worked well and eagerly.

At last, on the sixth evening, the preliminary work was complete.

"You fellows had better take a day off to-morrow," said Heritage, kindly, as the two sun-tanned youngsters came in to supper.

"We're all right, sir," declared Austin. "This sort of thing suits us down to the ground."

"Yes, you don't look as if there was much the matter with you," smiled Heritage, as he glanced them over with his keen grey eyes, and noted with satisfaction the way in which the muscles of both—Clive especially—were hardening and swelling under their clear brown skins. "And I'm not going to give you too slack a time. But we want fish for the camp, and if you care to take the dinghy you can go out and catch some."

"Whoop!" shouted Austin. And then, ashamed of his sudden outburst, "I beg your pardon, sir."

Heritage laughed outright. "Don't apologise. I like to see a chap keen. Only don't make that row when you're fishing, or you won't catch much."

"I've caught trout on Dartmoor, sir," replied Austin, nettled.

"Then it's my turn to beg your pardon. If you can do that you can catch anything."

"You haven't had a look at those pearls yet, sir," said John Pagan, who had just come in.

"All right, I'll see them after supper."

The cook of the *Brilliant* had his galley rigged ashore, and with a Kanaka helper kept the camp in a good temper with plenty of well-cooked dishes. To-night they had corned beef hash, baked yams, a tart made of tinned fruit, and a dessert of fresh cocoanuts.

Coffee was the drink, for Heritage allowed no spirits except in case of illness.

By the time that the meal had been finished and cleared away the swift darkness had fallen, and a lamp was lighted and placed in the middle of the table.

Pagan took a small tin box from his pocket, opened it, and lifted a layer of cotton wool. Then he turned out its contents upon the table.

A gasp of delight and surprise came from the little knot who were gathered round, for the pearls, though few in number, were of amazing size and lustre, and gleamed under the lamplight with an exquisite iridescent sheen.

"I have some hundreds of seed pearls besides, but these are the only ones worth looking at," said Pagan, as he rolled them over with the tip of his big, square forefinger. "These, and this," he added.

He took out another box, and, unwrapping some small object, handed it to Heritage.

Heritage took it and held it up. It was one of those curiosities which, now and then, are found in a large pearl oyster, and of which the most famous example is the well-known "Southern Cross."

This was not a cross, but a five-pointed star, almost perfectly regular in shape, and perhaps an inch across. It was all pure pearl, and anything more wonderful or beautiful could hardly have been imagined.

"Pretty, ain't it?" said Pagan.

"That's no word for it," said Heritage. "It's the most exquisite thing that I ever saw in my life, and if I'm not much mistaken, it's worth all the rest of these pearls put together. The "Southern Cross" sold for £20,000. This is worth more money, for the pearl is thicker and finer. Pagan, you have a great prize here, and you shall have ten per cent. of whatever it fetches, besides your ordinary share.

"What shall we call it?" he went on, turning to the boys. "It ought to have a name."

"Call it the Dog Star, after Chump," suggested Austin.

"That will do excellently," said Heritage, with a laugh. "It couldn't——"

At this moment Clive sprang up so suddenly that he sent his camp-stool flying, and dashed towards the door.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Heritage.

"I thought I heard a rustle, sir," said Austin, as he, too, jumped up and hurried after his friend.

In a minute or so Clive came back, hot and breathless.

"He's gone!" he exclaimed angrily. "I can't see a sign of him."

"Who's gone?" demanded Heritage.

"The fellow that was at the window," answered Clive. "He was looking in at us."

"Who was he?"

"I don't know. I only caught the least glimpse of him. He was off as I raised my head. All I know is he was a brown-skinned man."

"One of your Kanakas, Pagan?" asked the captain.

"No, indeed, sir. They wouldn't come poking their heads in like that," replied Pagan, with some indignation. "Besides, they've all seen the pearls."

"But there's no other native on the island."

"Yes, there is, sir," broke in Austin. "There's the Malay."

"Kwala. Sure, he's safe locked up in the little hut beyond the storehouse," said O'Rourke.

"We'd best go and see," said Heritage, frowning.

Pagan put the pearls back in his pocket, and they all hurried off together.

Outside, the night was very dark, for clouds had come up at sunset, and a thunderstorm was threatening.

The hut where the Malay had been confined was at the other end of the enclosure. It was small but stout, and it had not been considered necessary to keep a guard over it.

O'Rourke handed Heritage the key, and he unlocked the heavy padlock. Austin, who had the hurricane lamp, swung it forward.

A sharp exclamation burst from the captain's lips.

"Chesney was right. The prisoner is gone."

On the floor lay the leg-irons, both filed through. At the back of the hut was a burrow in the sandy soil which ran right under the back wall. Apart from the mystery of how the Malay had got the file, the manner of his escape was clear.

"Rouse the camp," cried Heritage, who was the first to recover from his surprise. "We must catch him at once. Nothing will be safe with that little fiend loose. O'Rourke, you guard the landing-place. He will probably try for a boat."

In a minute all was hurry and excitement. Lanterns flashed in every direction, and men ran in and out among the cocoanut palms, hunting here and there for the fugitive.

In a very short time O'Rourke was back with news. "Too late, sorr," he said angrily, as he found Heritage waiting anxiously in the messroom. "The spalpeen's stole a small boat, and got away. There's six of my chaps afther him in a whaler, but I'm not thinking they'll catch him. 'Tis dark as a wolf's maw, and no lightning even to guide thim."

O'Rourke was right. Though the boat pulled round the lagoon for more than two hours they saw nothing of Kwala, and at last Heritage gave orders for all except the usual two sentries to turn in.

The thunder-storm passed without breaking, and the morning dawned clear, fine, and hot. But it was a silent and worried-looking crowd who gathered in the messroom for the morning meal.

"I wish I knew where the little reptile got that file," growled John Pagan, as he helped himself to porridge.

"I wouldn't worry too much," said Heritage comfortingly. "After all, we're saved the bother of looking after the fellow. That's cheap at the price of the boat. And in any case there's no land he can make. The chances are that the wretched man will drift till he dies of thirst."

"If I thought that I wouldn't worry," said Pagan, harshly. "It's his being picked up I'm afraid of. He's seen the pearls, and he'll move heaven and earth to get them."

After breakfast the two boys lost no time in getting down to the dinghy. They had tackle of all sorts, from a shark hook on chain cable down to a fine steel wire and thin silk lines for the smaller, shyer inhabitants of the lagoon.

Sundra, the head Kanaka, had got bait for them in the shape of some white grubs called "sawyers," found among the roots of the scrub in the centre of the island, and he pointed out the best places to fish.

Forgetting all about Kwala, they pulled off

in high spirits, and, anchoring near the reef, baited their hooks and set to work.

"I don't believe we'll catch a thing," declared Austin, looking doubtfully over into the still water. "It's so beastly clear, you can see everything down to the very bottom. Surely the fish aren't fools enough to bite when they can see the line."

"It's always the same, Sundra says, and he catches lots," replied Clive, who had not had Austin's experience of the clear trout streams of the high moor.

"By jove, I've got one already!" he cried in great excitement, and began to pull up rapidly hand over hand.

"Great Christopher, it looks like a painted porcupine!" exclaimed Austin, as a round creature covered with spines came up and splashed feebly on the surface. "And it's got a beak! Ugh! I never saw such a brute in my life."

Clive drew it into the boat, handling it gingerly, for the spines were sharp.

It was a sea parrot, a fish which neither of the boys had seen before.

But they had little time to admire it, for next moment Austin felt a tug at his line.

This was a goby of most ferocious appearance and brilliant ultramarine colour.

Then the fun began in earnest, and one or other, and sometimes both at once, were hauling up fish as fast as they could bait and lower their hooks.

"Nothing shy about these," said Clive, as a big horse mackerel thrashed wildly on the surface.

"I'd rather stalk trout," said Austin. "But, all the same, this isn't bad fun. I wonder if these weird-looking beasts are good to eat.

They had caught four or five dozen, and the bottom of the boat was covered with many coloured sea creatures, when, all of a sudden, the fish stopped biting.

"That's rum," said Austin, after waiting fully five minutes without so much as a nibble.

"I expect it's a shark about," said Clive. "Sundra told me that would stop 'em biting."

"Can't see anything of the sort," replied Austin, peering down through the pellucid blue depths to the tangle of exquisitely coloured seaweeds far below.

"He may be cruising around behind one of those big coral mushrooms," said Clive. "Anyhow, I vote we put a shark hook over and see what happens."

"All right. But if we hook him won't there be trouble? This boat is a bit light to stand the pull of a big shark."

"We'll have to get up the kedge pretty quick if we do hook him. Then he can tow us around as much as he likes. We're all right so long as we're inside the lagoon."

"Suppose he makes tracks for the open sea?"

"Plenty of time to think of that if we catch him. Don't count your sharks before they're hooked."

They had brought a good lump of salt pork with them, and with this they baited the big shark hook and lowered it gently into the crystal depths.

The slight tide run carried the hook and bait some distance astern, and the two boys, leaning over the side, watched it till it vanished among the jungle of gorgeously coloured weeds which covered the floor of the lagoon.

"There's something moving along the bottom," said Clive presently. "Something jolly big. See it, Austin?"

"I believe I do. But what on earth is it? A shark doesn't creep along the bottom like that."

"Whatever it is, it's coming straight for the bait," said Clive, in an excited whisper.

Now both could see a slight commotion among the weeds as Clive suddenly clutched Austin's arm.

"Look at its eyes!" he muttered.

Austin saw two great glassy orbs, about a foot apart. They were larger than the biggest marbles, and set in raised sockets. They glared upwards with a steady, unwinking, malignant stare.

"Great guns!" exclaimed Austin. "It's the big ray."

So it was, for now they could plainly see its huge flattened body, its squarish outline covering many square yards of the bottom.

"Pull up the line," muttered Clive. "We can't do anything with a brute like that."

"Pull up the line! Not much," retorted Austin. And as the words passed his lips the line gave a little jerk.

CHAPTER IX

AT GRIPS WITH THE SEA-DEVIL

"GOT him, by thunder!" said Austin, his eyes aglow with excitement. "No, don't pull yet. He'll take a minute or so to swallow it."

Jerk, jerk, jerk, each sharper than the last. Then the cord began to run out steadily.

Austin let it run for several seconds, then rising to his feet braced one foot on the thwart, took the line in both hands and flung his whole weight backwards.

There was a jerk which almost pulled the boat's nose under water.

"Up anchor!" roared Austin.

In the excitement they had forgotten all about the kedge. Clive did the only thing possible—whipped out his knife, and as the rope came tight slashed it.

Austin was doing his best to check the flying line, but it whistled through his fingers at a pace which rasped the skin off.

"Make it fast," cried Clive, who was so excited that he had forgotten all about his previous reluctance to try conclusions with the monster.

Flinging some coils loose, Austin took a turn round the forward thwart, and "snubbed" the line.

Next instant came a jerk which sent the gunwale level with the water. The line tautened, and the boat began to smoke through the water as though in tow of a destroyer.

A feather of foam sprang up on either side of the bow, and the two boys flung themselves back into the stern, sitting as far aft as possible, in the endeavour to keep her from towing clean under.

"Now we're in for it," said Austin, his eyes gleaming with excitement. "Keep your knife ready, Clive, in case we have to cut. And where's that lance?"

Clive reached forward, got the long light whaling lance from the bottom of the boat, and drew off the sheath which protected the head. This head was leaf-shaped and sharp as a razor. It was Sundra who had insisted on their taking it, and as things turned out it was lucky they had done so.

The ray kept a straight course, parallel with the reef. Every now and then it spurted, and each time Austin was forced to slacken the line to save them from driving under.

So far they had seen nothing of their formidable capture, but all of a sudden the line slackened and a gigantic form shot upwards out of a smother of foam.

For a moment it seemed to hang suspended full six feet above the sea, and the boys both caught their breath as they realised the gigantic proportions of the sea-devil.

Then down with a report like a small cannon, sending the spray flying in every direction.

"Phew, what a brute!" said Clive. "Why he must weigh three tons!"

"Yes, and more. Hullo, what's he doing now?"

The line had gone quite slack, and the boat rocked in the waves flung up by the monster's fall.

"Look out, here he comes!" almost screamed Clive, as a giant form rose through the clear water alongside. Its jaws were wide agape, showing hideous rows of crushing teeth, and its flukes were widely extended. It looked the very embodiment of rage and evil.

It was Austin who snatched up the lance and drove it fiercely at their fearful enemy.

The keen-edged point struck it full between the eyes, and the huge sea beast swerved in mid career, while the water was encrimsoned with a torrent of blood.

Austin kept hold of the shaft of the spear, and, though he was as near as a touch pulled overboard, managed to jerk the iron out.

Next moment the line tightened again with a violent jerk, and again the boat went rushing across the calm surface of the wide lagoon.

"You damaged him that time," said Clive exultantly.

"He's a long way from dead yet," replied Austin between set teeth. "And if he tries that game again we may not get off so easily next time."

By this time they were nearing the passage which led through the reef to the open sea. To their dismay, the sea-devil swerved and headed for the opening.

"We shall have to cut," said Clive, frowning. "We daren't risk those breakers in this small boat. We'd be swamped in a jiffy."

"We'll hang on to the last," returned Austin grimly. "It would be a bit of a triumph to bring this brute back to camp."

In a very few minutes they were near enough to the opening to see the foam-crested surf swinging in great rollers through the gap.

Like a flash the monster swung and headed for the channel.

Austin seized the knife and sprang forward. Before he could cut, the heave of a swell running through the opening broke over the bows. Instantly the boat was half swamped, and it was only the boy's quickness in jumping aft again that saved her from going right under.

"Bale!" shouted Austin, and Clive, snatching up the dipper, set to work like mad.

The great, flat, hideous head rose clear of the water, and the huge jaws met in the gunwale with a sharp, rending sound. The next moment the boat vanished beneath the surface.

This was the moment which their enemy chose to turn upon them a second time. As before, he broached, and before the echoing crash of his fall had died away the line had gone slack and he was on them again.

Again Austin seized the lance, but the sea-devil had learnt its lesson, and with more cunning than such a creature could have been credited with, went right under the boat and came up the other side.

"Here—this side!" cried Clive. And Austin spun round.

It was too late.

The great, flat, hideous head rose clear of the water, and the huge jaws met in the gunwale with a sharp, rending sound.

The boat, already half full of water, rolled slowly over. But before it quite capsized Austin made a desperate stab at the ray, and, more by good luck than good aim, drove the steel straight into its head. The point probably penetrated right into its brain, for immediately it began to lash with its tail and smite the water furiously with its immense flukes.

Foam flew in every direction.

"Jump!" shrieked Austin, and leaving the lance sticking in the sea-devil's head, he made a wild spring out on the other side, and struck the water just as the boat, dragged down by the vast weight of the ray, vanished beneath the surface.

As he came up he looked round, and to his intense relief saw Clive's head close by.

"The reef. Make for the reef!" he cried.

They were only a few dozen yards from the line of rocks, and, luckily for them, it was almost full ebb. In another couple of minutes they had reached the ledge and scrambled hurriedly up into comparative safety.

"Great Christopher, that was a close call!" gasped Austin, as he gained his feet and swept the water out of his eyes.

"Where's the ray?" muttered Clive, looking round in a half dazed fashion.

"Gone down, and taken the boat with him. He's pretty badly damaged. I got him full between the eyes, and left the spear sticking in him."

"I wonder if he's dead."

"Not yet. Takes a lot to kill a brute like that."

As he spoke, the water broke close under the reef.

The ray, summoning all its remaining energies, had risen to the surface. First the long straight shaft of the spear shot upwards out of the blue depths; then the black bulk of the sea-devil darkened the shining blue.

"Look out!" said Austin apprehensively. "If he sees us he'll go for us. And he can reach us with that spiked tail of his. Get back on the top of the rocks."

They scrambled quickly up to the top and over on to the seaward side. The surf was breaking with a deep-toned roar immediately below them, and the spray flew over them in sheets. But the jagged edges of the coral gave good hand-hold, and they clung there watching anxiously for what would happen next.

The cold glare in the glassy eyes of the sea monster was hideous to behold. For a few moments it cruised slowly round, evidently searching for its human enemies.

The blood was pouring from the lance-wound in its head, and it was plain that its strength was slowly but surely failing.

Failing to find what it sought, rage seized the creature. Once more he flung himself clear from the surface, and fell, with a resounding crash, full upon the upturned boat, which, by this time, had floated up again. Upon this it vented its last paroxysm of rage. Seizing it with its teeth, it literally rent it to fragments, sending splinters flying in every direction.

In a few moments there was nothing left but broken scraps of wood, which tossed on the waves flung up by the giant fish.

Then, exhausted by this last tremendous effort, a quiver passed through the monster. It turned over and floated on its back, and presently was still.

"Dead!" said Austin quietly.

"Dead as a door-nail," added Clive. "And let me tell you, Austin, the next time I meet one of his kind I mean to give him a wide berth."

"Same here," replied Austin. "The next question is, how are we going to get back? Seems to me we're rather in a hat. Two miles is a pretty long swim, and that chap may have brothers, to say nothing of sharks."

"We must wait till they send a boat out," said Clive.

"Yes, but they're all on the other side of the island. We may stick here all day and no one see us."

"By Jove, I never thought of that! We're in the soup with a vengeance."

"We shall be when the tide turns," said Austin grimly.

"They're sure to come after us sooner or later," said Clive comfortingly. "And we're all right for the next four or five hours. Look here, I'll swim over and get that lance, and we'll stick up a signal."

and they were soon both hungry and thirsty. Two hours passed. The tide began to turn. There was no one in sight on the nearer side of the island.

Another hour, and the tide was half way

With a feeling of intense relief Clive saw Austin reach the boat and scramble aboard

This was done, and the two boys perched themselves on the grilling rocks and waited with what patience they could. All their food had gone with the boat, and also the beaker of water. The sun was fiercely hot, up the reef. The tops of the waves were breaking clean over them. Austin was getting very anxious. He stood up and stared around. Suddenly he gave a sharp exclamation, and pointed out to sea.

"What's that, Clive?"

Clive stared, shading his eyes with both hands from the blinding glare of the afternoon sun.

A small, dark object was rising and falling on the smooth swells a mile or so away out to sea.

"It's a boat," he said. "An empty boat."

CHAPTER X

THE COMING OF THE CASTAWAY

YAWING from side to side at the whim of tide and wind, the boat drifted, slowly but steadily, towards the reef.

To the boys watching her keenly, she appeared to be derelict. She had no mast or sail, and there was no sign of any crew.

As she came nearer, they could see that her paint was worn and blistered. She looked as though she had been knocking about for a long time.

"She's coming straight in," said Clive presently.

"She'll go to bits on the reef if she hits it," replied Austin. "I must stop her before she gets into the surf."

"You can't swim through it," said Clive sharply.

"I think I can," replied Austin modestly. "There's no wind to speak of, and if I dive through the first roller as it breaks I ought to be all right."

"It's beastly risky," said Clive nervously. "Think of the sharks."

"It's got to be done, old chap. We need that boat."

As he spoke he was pulling off his boots and shirt, and stood up dressed only in his light drill trousers and singlet.

The boat was now within little more than a cable's length of the reef. Austin waited till one of the great blue swells was on the point of breaking, then flinging up his hands above his head sprang outwards.

He vanished with hardly a splash, and Clive, watching anxiously, saw his dark form cleave like a dolphin through the crystal heart of the wave and presently bob up safely on the far side.

Getting a good breath, he dived again, and once past the second line of surf was safe, and began to swim strongly towards the boat.

With a feeling of intense relief Clive saw him reach it and scramble aboard. Next minute he had a pair of sculls in the rowlocks and was pulling hard for the gap in the reef.

The day was calm and the surf was not breaking in the wild way that it broke on the morning when the schooner made the passage. All the same it required great skill and care to keep the clumsy boat's head straight to the run of the swells, and Clive was vastly relieved when Austin came shooting safely through, and, swinging the boat briskly, pulled round to where his friend was standing.

Then Clive saw that Austin was not alone. Stretched in the bottom of the boat lay the limp figure of a man.

"Just as well we happened to be on the reef," said Austin quietly. "We've saved this chap from Davy Jones's locker."

"He's dead already, isn't he?" said Clive quickly, as he stared down at the body. It was that of a man of at least six feet three, and built on enormous lines. His rolled-up sleeves showed a pair of arms that Sandow himself might have envied, and his blue cotton shirt, open at the throat, gave a glimpse of the massive arch of his chest covered with a forest of thick black hair.

His face was in keeping with the rest of his appearance. It might have been cut out of rock. The huge square chin, high cheek-bones, and beetling brows had been burnt by the sun to the colour of dark mahogany.

His eyes were closed, and salt crystals coated his thick eyebrows and his coarse dark hair.

"No, he's not dead," answered Austin. "He's breathing, but he looks as if he'd had a pretty rough passage. We must get him back as quick as we can. The skipper will know what to do for him."

The boat, if weather-beaten, was sound, and there were two pairs of oars and a mast and sail in her.

The boys soon stepped the mast, and set the sail, and in less than half an hour were back at the landing.

They shouted for help, and a couple of men came down with a stretcher and carried the castaway up to the camp, where Heritage put him to bed and administered beaten egg and brandy.

"Don't say anything about the ray," whispered Austin in Clive's ear, as they waited outside the hut where the shipwrecked man had been carried.

"Why not?"

"I want to bring the brute back, and spring a

surprise on them. We can use this chap's boat."

Clive nodded, and just then Heritage came out.

"How is he?" asked Austin and Clive at once.

"All right," said Heritage. "He's come round already."

"Did he tell you who he is, sir?" asked Austin.

"Yes. He says his name is Burnett, and that he was mate of a whaler called the *Anne Hopkins*, which was burnt at sea three days ago."

"What became of the rest of her crew?"

"According to his account, they bolted and left him and the skipper alone. The skipper was killed by the fall of the mast, and he got off in the only boat that was left."

"Funny thing he didn't bring some grub with him," said Austin thoughtfully.

Heritage gave the boy a quick glance. "I asked him that, but he said there wasn't time."

"He's a queer-looking bird, isn't he, sir?" said Austin, as the three walked away together.

"I think he's the biggest and most powerful-looking man I ever saw in my life," replied Heritage. "And one of the ugliest," he added as an afterthought.

As the boys went back to the hut which they shared between them the supper bugle was sounded, and they just managed to wash and dress and reach the mess-house in time.

"Mind—not a word about the ray," said Austin as they went in.

"Suppose they ask about the boat?"

"Put 'em off somehow. I'm awfully keen on springing the beast on them. If the sharks haven't tackled him we ought to be able to tow him in."

They need not have worried, for everyone was too keen about the new arrival to think of the fishing.

O'Rourke was not best pleased.

"Sure, I wish he'd found some other island to be washed up on," he remarked, frowning. "It's mesilf doesn't like the look of the big spalpeen. And what will we do wid him at all?"

"Wait till we're sending to the mainland and send him off," said Heritage.

"And have him blabbing all round about the pearls, captain. Faith, we'd be having ivery beach-comber in the seven seas upon us in a month."

"If he's a decent fellow we might keep him on and give him his share," said Heritage.

"That will be the best plan, sir," said Pagan quietly. But O'Rourke kept silence. Plainly the idea did not please him.

The very minute supper was over the boys slipped away and made down to the beach. They launched the boat, put in a coil of rope to tow the ray, a lantern, and also a harpoon in case they met with sharks.

Then they pulled quietly away into the darkness.

The moon had not yet risen, and a soft veil of cloud hid the stars. They had to make a course by compass, and when they reached the reef found themselves a long way from the channel.

"You take the lantern, Clive, and try to spot the beast," said Austin. "I'll pull along slowly."

Clive agreed, and the search began.

They cruised in this fashion for more than an hour, but could see nothing of the sea-devil.

"He's drifted out to sea, I believe," said Clive at last.

The search went on for another half hour and then Clive turned to Austin.

"The wretched lamp has gone out," he said.

"Never mind. I've got some more oil. We'll fill it and take one more turn."

He shipped his oars and was searching in the stern locker for the oil-can, when a slight throbbing sound came to his ears.

"What's that?" he said, sitting up sharply.

"The throb of a screw," answered Clive. "What's more, it's the *Brilliant's* screw."

"Rot, man! She's at her moorings."

"Was, if you like—she's not now. You don't think I've been all those weeks in her without knowing the sound of her engine."

"But it's impossible! Who could be bringing her out, especially at this time of night?"

"That I know as little as you do, but I'm sure, as I sit here, that it's the schooner. Yes, there she is," as a dark blot showed against the grey night sky. "All sails furled, and running under her engine alone."

"She's making straight for the channel," said Austin, tensely. "Clive, there's something wrong, and it's up to us to see what. Ship the other pair of sculls and pull like mad! We've got to cut her off before she reaches the passage."

(Another long instalment of this thrilling story next month.)

THE COLLECTOR'S GUIDE TO VALUES

THE collector's catalogue, as I have already pointed out, is useful and instructive in many ways: but its greatest use is as a guide to values. Without its aid in this direction the collector would have no clue to the prices at which he should be able to buy stamps for his collection or to sell his duplicate specimens.

Now "catalogue prices" are a source of much perplexity to young philatelists, and it may be useful to explain precisely what they mean and how they work out in actual practice.

Specimens in "Catalogue" Condition

Look at the price columns of the philatelic catalogue. They are two in number, the first column giving quotations for unused, and the second for used specimens. In one or two special countries, like Great Britain, there is sometimes a sub-division of the "used" column into two, one giving prices for "fine used" and the other for "ordinary used" specimens; but as a general thing we have just the two columns of prices for "unused" and "used" respectively.

These quotations are put before us as the prices at which the stamp dealers publishing the catalogue are prepared to sell; but that does not help us much unless we know what *sort* of specimen of this or that stamp we shall get for our money. "Condition" is everything in present-day collecting. A stamp may be worth 2*d.* or 2*s.*, according to its condition.

It is therefore of the highest importance to remember that "catalogue condition" nowadays is understood to mean average condition—that is to say, a perfect stamp in every essential particular, but not what would be called a "superb" specimen.

Over Catalogue or Under Catalogue?

Thus it stands to reason that some stamps will be worth "more than catalogue" and others "less than catalogue," according to the condition of the specimens. The collector in such cases must depend largely upon his own good judgment; but a few general hints will assist him on this all-important subject of stamp values.

Common stamps, to begin with, are invariably worth less than their catalogue prices, the only exceptions being unused specimens priced at face value or a fraction over face value. I include in the "common" class all stamps standing at less than 6*d.* in the catalogue. Broadly speaking, the commoner the stamp the greater the discount one must allow from its catalogue price. Thus many stamps are catalogued at ½*d.* because stamp dealers do not care to trade in farthings; but even a farthing, in many instances, would be much above the true value of the stamp.

Medium stamps—say varieties catalogued at prices from 6*d.* to £1—are in many cases worth "full catalogue" in fine condition, while many varieties in this class may be saleable for more than catalogue price if in superb state as regards centring, colour, etc. But in average condition (which is "catalogue condition") the great majority of medium stamps are worth, in the open market, from 10 per cent. to 25 per cent. "less than catalogue."

Scarce stamps, in which class I place all varieties priced above £1 in the catalogues, though some may be worth a little less than catalogue, yet the majority should realise full catalogue quotations, or more if in first-class condition.

Stamps at "Half Catalogue"

Many CAPTAIN readers from time to time have expressed surprise that dealers should constantly advertise "stamps at 'half catalogue,'" and have asked "what reliance can be placed on catalogue prices when dealers can give 50 per cent. discount and still make a profit?" The answer is to be found in what I have already written. For common and medium stamps catalogue prices are not necessarily real market values. The chief use of such prices is to set a standard of relative values by which a collector, using his own judgment as to "condition" and other considerations, is able to arrive at approximate valuations for buying and selling.

THE PICTORIAL STAMPS OF BOSNIA

AND THEIR VARIETIES OF PERFORATION

The instinct of the bargain-hunter is aroused in the stamp collector by such issues as the large pictorial stamps of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1906-1907. These stamps show no important variations of design or paper or colour, but their perforations present a more bewildering series of varieties than any similar issue of recent times. As further variations have been brought to light since the publication of the new season's catalogues, it may be of interest to CAPTAIN readers to have a full summary of the discoverable varieties. As is well known, the series of stamps consists of sixteen values—1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, and 50 heller, and 1, 2, and 5 krone, all of them being pictures of Bosnian life and scenery except the topmost value, the 5 krone, which presents a portrait of the veteran Austrian Emperor.

A list of the different styles and gauges of perforation so far discovered, together with the values to be found under each head, will show what a fascinating field is here opened up for the variety hunter.

The pictorial stamps of Bosnia.

First of all, the full run of the values from 1 heller to 5 krone may be found in the following styles: (*a*) imperforate; (*b*) perforated 12½ all round—the commonest perf.; (*c*) perf. 9½ all round; (*d*) perf. 12½ and 9½ compound; (*e*) perf. 12½ and 6½ compound; (*f*) perf. 9½ and 6½ compound; and (*g*) a double compound of 12½ and 9½ and 6½.

Here, one would say, is work enough for the perforation gauge, since no less than 112 varieties are accounted for; but a good many more varieties remain:—

Perforated 6½ *all round*: This is a new variant, as hitherto the 6½ gauge had only appeared in combination with the 9½ or 12½ perforations. Only two values, the 45 heller and 5 krone, have been found in this condition, and I am indebted to Messrs. Bright & Son for news of them.

Perforated 13½ all round. The 6 heller is known in this State, the only Bosnian pictorial to be issued with this perforation.

Perf. 10½ and 9½ compound: 1, 35, and 45 heller.

Perf. 10½ and 12½ compound: 1, 2, 3, 6, 25, 30, 35, 40, and 45 heller.

Perf. 10½ and 12½ and 9½ compound: 1, 3, 5, 6, 10, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, and 45 heller.

Two interesting combinations of "perf." and "imperf." have recently been discovered by Messrs. Bright & Son. These are a pair of the 5 krone, with a compound of 6½ and 9½, but "imperforate between," and another pair of the top value with the "double compound" of 12½, 9½, 6½, also "imperforate between."

Never, surely, have we had such a carnival of mixed perfs. in the whole history of philately. And I am far from advising collectors generally to go out of their way to hunt for these things, or to spend any considerable amount of money in securing them. One complete set of the sixteen values, regardless of perforations, will answer the general collector's requirements, but for those who have the opportunity of looking through large quantities of the 1906 Bosnians, I can imagine no finer philatelic Tom Tiddler's ground than this.

COLLECTORS IN COUNCIL

PENNY BLACKS WITH DIFFERENT POSTMARKS

"I have two English 1*d.* black stamps, one with a black postmark and one with a red postmark. Are these two distinct issues?"—*K., Kingston-on-Thames.*

No; but both are worth keeping, if space in your album permits. Various colours were tried for postmarking in the days of the "penny black," and the difficulty in getting any cancellation to show up well on the black stamp was one of the reasons for changing to red for the penny value in the following year.

SEYCHELLES STAMPS, PLATES I. AND II.

"In a mixed lot of Seychelles I have bought there are some of the Queen's heads marked 'Plate I.' and 'Plate II.' They all look alike to me. Can you tell me the chief points of difference?"—*E. A. F., Sevenoaks.*

Here is a quick and simple test: Examine the stamps through a glass, and study that section of the Queen's crown which contains a diamond-shaped jewel. In Plate I. this section has some lines of shading to the right of the jewel; in Plate II. it is quite free from shading. The distinction is important, because there are differences of value, notably in the case of the 4 cents of 1890, which is far scarcer in Plate I. than in Plate II.

PRINCE RANJITSINHJI'S STAMPS

"Which are the postage stamps issued for Prince Ranjitsinhji's State in India? I have some bearing a large letter 'R.' Are they the ones?"—*L. B. W., Lancaster.*

No; probably those you have are the stamps of Jhind. The famous Sussex cricketer is now known in India as H.H. the Jam of Nawanagar—sometimes spelled Nowanuggur—and, of course, the postage stamps issued for his dominions come under that name in the lists of the Indian Native States issues. There are three types of these stamps, issued in 1877, 1880, and 1893—first, a series of small oblong stamps with a curved dagger as design; then some very curious labels without any design at all, but simply carrying a four-line inscription in native characters; and finally a much larger series, bearing a coat of arms. The Nawanagar stamps, as a matter of fact, have been obsolete for some years, and none have been issued under Prince "Ranji's" auspices at all.

NOTABLE NEW ISSUES

Bavaria.—A new value, 60 pfennige (about 7½*d.* British), has been issued for the kingdom of Bavaria. It is perforated 11½, and has the well-known Bavarian "wavy lines" watermark.

60pf., green, on buff paper.

Chili.—Fifteen handsome new portrait stamps have made their appearance. Christopher Columbus, formerly the only celebrity to appear on the stamps of Chili, is now only one of many, the company including Valdivia, O'Higgins, Balmaceda, and others who have figured prominently in Chilian history. The values are from 1 centavo to 10 pesos.

Dutch Colonies.—All the current stamps of the Dutch Colonies, from ½ cent. to 2½ gulden, have been overprinted with the word "Dienst" to indicate official use.

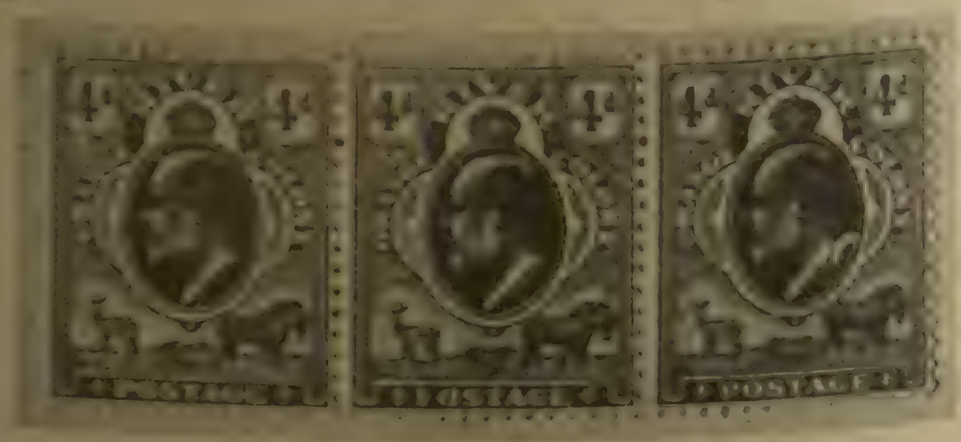
Ecuador.—Various portrait stamps just received at the time of writing are evidently the advance guard of a complete new set. The framework of each stamp is printed in colour, while the central portrait is in black.

1 centavo, vermilion and black (Roca).
2 centavos, blue and black (Noboa).
5 ,, red and black (Urvina).
10 ,, blue and black (Moreno).

German Empire.—A 60 pfennige value has been added to the list as in the case of Bavaria. The colour is magenta.

THE LATEST COLONIAL "ERROR"

VERY rarely does an actual error of lettering creep into British colonial postage stamps nowadays; but this has happened in the case of the current 4*d.* King Edward's Head of Orange River Colony, one specimen on the sheet bearing a misprint of the word "Postage," thus "Iostage." A lady philatelist of Johannesburg, Miss G. Killick, has been



kind enough to send me a photograph of a strip of three stamps, showing the error of spelling on the central specimen. "I might add," writes Miss Killick, "that speculators have secured all the specimens available locally, and that the Government has been informed, so that no more of these errors will be issued."

The variety, therefore, bids fair to be a real rarity, and I advise philatelic Captainites to keep a sharp look-out for specimens that may have been used on mail matter to this country.

SPECIAL COMPETITION FOR STAMP COLLECTORS

FIRST PRIZE (Goods value Two Guineas) from Messrs. Whitfield, King & Co.

SECOND PRIZE (Goods value Thirty Shillings) from Messrs. Errington & Martin

THIRD PRIZE (Goods value One Guinea) from Messrs. Bright & Son

And a Magnificent Special Prize (value Three Guineas) presented by Mr. L. S. Charlick

AND MANY VALUABLE CONSOLATION PRIZES from Messrs. Lawn & Barlow, the Midland Stamp Co., Mr. James Rhodes, Messrs. Hamilton & Co., The Empire Stamp Co., William Ward, Mr. F. G. Rowe, Mr. J. E. Lea, Messrs. Lightbown & Co., H. McCraight, and W. H. Peckitt.

What You Have to Do

On this page are reproduced twelve incomplete postage stamps—that is to say, stamp designs from which some portion has been taken away or obliterated. The first set appeared in our November number, and a third set will appear in our January issue, making thirty-six in all.

What you have to do is to say what country, state, or colony each incomplete stamp belongs to.

Do not cut the magazine, but write your solution on a sheet of paper, giving the number of each incomplete stamp, together with the name of the country to which you think it belongs.

If you cannot recognise some of the stamps on sight, search for them in your philatelic catalogue. They are all adhesive postage stamps, to be found illustrated in all complete stamp catalogues. If you do not possess a catalogue, get one at once. It will be worth while.

Do not send in any solutions until you have had the January number of THE CAPTAIN, containing the third and last set of puzzle stamps. Full directions how to send in will then be given.

A competition coupon from *each* of the November, December, and January numbers of THE CAPTAIN must be enclosed with the complete list of answers. This coupon will be found on the Prizes Page in our advertisement pages. If you want to have two tries for this competition you must, of course, send two *complete* lists, and a set of three coupons with each.

POINTS TO REMEMBER.—(1) Only the name of *one* country must be placed against each number. A breach of this rule will mean disqualification. (2) This page is not to be cut, but a numbered and complete list of answers is to be sent in at the close of the competition. (3) Answers must not be sent in month by month, but must be kept till the last set of puzzle stamps have appeared, and then sent in on *one* sheet of paper.

The Editor's decision and awards in this competition must be accepted as final. In the event of a tie, neatness and age will be taken into account.

These are the Stamps you have to Identify.

13 14 15 16 17 18

19 20 21 22 23 24

This competition is quite simple, and every stamp collecting Captainite should enter it, and tell his friends about it. All that is required is a careful study of a stamp catalogue. If you have not a catalogue, you will find many excellent ones advertised in our advertisement pages. They are quite inexpensive, and

THE PRIZES IN THIS COMPETITION ARE WORTH WINNING.

FOOZLE'S CHRISTMAS

An Exceptionally Funny Complete Story

By GUNBY HADATH

C.D.

"CHRISTMAS games? *(remarked my friend Brown Minor)*—I never shine at those affairs myself.

But talking of Christmas games, did you ever hear of the Snankoscope? I thought not. Foozle invented that last Christmas.

You remember Foozle? His real name's Ringley Talkington, you know, and his people have a tipping place at Wyveldore. Well, last Christmas he asked the Poet and myself down there, as we three tooled straight off from St. Oliver's.

Grabbles had been asked too, but for some reason or other he professed he couldn't come, much to the disappointment of Foozle's pater and mater, who had never seen him. It sounds rummy, doesn't it, that anyone should grieve not to see old Grabbie. But you know what I mean.

Foozle's a lucky man in his pater. You'll never find a jollier, more genial old boy, and he'd made up his mind to give us a top-hole time. So long as we didn't pull the place down over his head, he said, we could do whatever we liked. That's the sort of host you want.

Well, we'd been at Wyveldore two days, and were just getting our eyes in, when on the third morning, as the Poet and I were giving the under-gardener a lesson in jiu-jitsu, up strolled Foozle. He looked upset.

"What's wrong?" we cried.

The under-gardener had picked himself up, and was beginning to skulk away.

"Everything!" groaned Foozle.

If Grabbles had been there, he'd have started in to fire off a string of questions. But we knew better. We left Foozle to break his bad news in his own way.

"Ever heard of Septimus Pepstone?" he inquired, presently.

We shook our heads. It wasn't likely.

Foozle smiled wearily. "Hang Septimus Pepstone!" he sighed.

"Certainly hang Septimus!" chipped in the Poet. "But why?"

"He's coming down here. He's coming down to-day."

We remarked politely that we should be charmed to make the gentleman's acquaintance.

"Oh, will you?" drawled Foozle, with a trifle more animation. "Will you truly? Old Pepstone is a beast!"

"How?" said we.

"A beast of the bore race; a bumptious beast; a bouncing beast; a bounding beast. In fact, absolutely unbearable," insisted Foozle.

"How?"

"You wait—you'll see."

"Then why ever has your pater asked him down?"

At last Foozle's rage exploded. "That's just it," he exclaimed. "The pater hasn't asked him down. He's asked himself. Exactly the sort of thing that Pepstone does."

"Oh, I see. He's an old friend of the family," purred the Poet. "I know those family friends——"

"Friend of the family!" snorted Foozle. "He's nothing of the sort. Socially, he's a stranger. Actually he does a lot of business with the pater. And intrudes on the connection."

"Wonder your pater stands it."

Foozle made a wry face. "Well, it's Christmas time, you see," he explained a little doubtfully, "and at Christmas time, you know, you can't quite hoof a chap away. The dad never would or could. 'Pepstone writes that he's all alone, and may he come, my dear?' 'Oh, Ringley! Not that awful creature!' 'Poor fellow! It's Christmas, my dear, Christmas!' I hear the pater replying. 'Let him come, my dear. Ringley and his friends will cheer him up a bit.'"

The Poet began to gurgle. "We'll try!" he said.

"Oh, will you?" Foozle was becoming

mysterious again. "I can just see you doing it! Wait. You'll see!"

And not another word upon the coming guest could we drag from him that morning. We returned to our jiu-jitsu.

But we couldn't shake off the feeling of depression which Foozle had instilled. If his warning meant anything, it meant that the new comer would turn out a wet blanket. Though, after all, why should he interfere with us? He would confine himself more likely to the society of the older folk.

But he didn't. He had no sooner arrived at lunch-time than he began to chip us three. He was a huge creature, standing quite six foot four in his socks, with a huge voice and a huge laugh, that pretended to be cheery and jovial. In reality it sounded like the guffaw of a laughing jackass—a laughing jackass on the gloat, as the Poet put it. And his mouth and cheeks were always greasy, as if he'd been wolfing buttered toast without a serviette.

In twenty-four hours we hated Septimus Pepstone quite heartily. He filled the whole house. You couldn't get away from him. He'd the impertinence to address us as his "little men"! He made himself disgustingly at home, and took it for granted that every soul in the place must run about for him.

"And now, my little men," he began after dinner one night, as he pinched poor old Talkington's pet chair and threw Mrs. Talkington's fancy-work on the floor, "now, my little men, let's have a jolly chat."

"Thank you, sir," lisped Foozle. "If you could just move a trifle, sir—to let a fellow see the fire——"

Mr. Pepstone never stirred. "Fire's bad for little boys," he guffawed. "Gives 'em chilblains. Ever have chilblains?"

"No," snapped the Poet.

"Oh—often catch chilblains at school, you know. By the way, where *do* you go to school?"

"St. Oliver's," said I.

"Eh—*where?* St. Oliver's? Never heard of it!"

I fancied I heard Foozle snorting in the background. "Most people have heard of St. Oliver's, sir," he remarked, placidly.

The fat beast guffawed again. We knew jolly well that he knew all about St. Oliver's. But he thought himself funny.

"Oh, it's a decent enough little place, I dare say," he grinned. "Any good at games?"

Now Foozle seemed determined not to be drawn. So he didn't resent this sneer, as I'd expected. "Oh, no, sir," he replied, with his most serious expression. "Oh, no! No good at games at all, sir. Rotten!"

Mr. Pepstone spread his flabby hands over the lower part of his chest, and shoved his legs out a bit wider. Then he lighted a cigar, and puffed the smoke into our faces. (Foozle's pater never smoked in the dining-room; smoke made Mrs. Talkington feel queer.) Mr. Pepstone was settling down to enjoy himself.

"What time did they run the hundred in last sports?" he asked.

"It was done in ten and two-fifths, sir," snapped the Poet, eagerly. "By Ring, of the School House." Foozle scowled at him. Why encourage the fat brute in the chair to go on bounding?

"Ah, fair! Very fair!" drawled Mr. Pepstone. "They did nine and four-fifths at *my* boy's school!"

"Where's that?" asked Foozle, quickly.

The other twirled his cigar round in his lips. Then, puffing his smoke all over the place, he murmured something which we couldn't catch. "Fine place—fine place—best school in the kingdom," he concluded, airily.

"Did you say *nine* and four-fifths, sir?" continued Foozle.

"Nine and four-fifths dead, my little man."

"But, sir, that is practically record."

"Very likely," nodded Mr. Pepstone.

"And who ran the hundred in that time, Mr. Pepstone?"

"My son Septimus."

We stared. We didn't even know the fellow had a son.

"*Who*, sir?"

"My lad Septimus."

"He must be a marvellous athlete!" gasped the Poet.

"He is. He takes after me," said Mr. Pepstone.

In a moment Foozle had grown most animated. "This is awfully interesting, sir!" he cried. "Does your son play cricket and footer?"

"A bit," drawled Mr. Pepstone, carelessly.

"Pretty well, sir?"

"Ah—fairly, fairly, my little man. He headed the school bowling *and* batting averages last season. Bowling, 109 wickets for an average of four or five runs apiece."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Foozle. "And batting, sir?"

"Ah—batting! Let's see. One doesn't remember much of these little things, you

know, but his average was somewhere in the eighties, I believe, for twenty odd innings."

"My aunt!" ejaculated Foozle. "He's magnificent!"

"Oh, we Pepstones are born that way. Ha, ha! My lad Sep is safe for his triple Blue, I fancy."

"And his work, sir?" This from the Poet, who was beginning to second Foozle's warm interest.

"No duffers in our family!" jerked Mr. Pepstone, with his great jackass guffaw. "We've all brains, every one. My lad Sep will win any open scholarship at Cambridge College that he likes. His head master's always saying so."

"Classics or maths?" lisped Foozle, without a smile at the man's idea of Cambridge "College."

"Both *or* either," said Mr. Pepstone, airily. "Both *or* either, my little man. Sep's not particular."

"Eh, what's that, Pepstone? I never knew you had a son." The door had opened to admit Foozle's pater, who must have heard the tail end of our conversation. "I never knew you had a son, Pepstone," he repeated.

Mr. Pepstone started, shifting his great body. But he made no attempt to surrender his chair, or make room round the fire.

"Ah—didn't you?" he puffed. "Quite fair cigars, these of yours, Talkington. But a bit green, eh? You got 'em cheap, ha, ha!"

"But your boy? Why did you not bring him here with you?" insisted Mr. Talkington.

Mr. Pepstone looked slowly round the room, and waved his flabby hands about. In the firelight his cheeks glistened horribly.

"Can't stand in the lad's way, you know, Talkington," he laughed.

"Eh, Pepstone? I don't follow."

"Well, my Sep's most awfully popular, don't you know. Never knew a lad so much run after. Always receiving invitations for his holidays—piles and piles of 'em—from all the really good people, don't you know. Can't stand in his way, Talkington."

I was sure I heard Foozle snorting this time. But his pater looked puzzled, and an awkward silence followed, till Foozle broke it.

"I see, Mr. Pepstone," he remarked in his most innocent tones, "I see. Everybody wants your son at Christmas?"

"Everybody! All the really good people. Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you sort of—er—spare him," continued Foozle. "It's jolly decent of you."

"Oh, no, no. It's only natural," laughed Mr. Pepstone. "This is all—ah—quite nice, don't you know, *but*——" And once more he waved his great hands in our faces. But you couldn't see much finger for the beastly diamond rings.

"And where is he now, sir?"

"Ah!"—the creature tried to wink—"ah, where *is* he? You'd like to know, my little men; now, wouldn't you?"

"Please," said Foozle. The Poet began to gurgle. Mr. Pepstone saw it, and eyed him for a moment dubiously. But he satisfied himself, apparently, that none of us would laugh at him.

"It's the sort of thing that we Pepstones don't—ah—say much about," he murmured, "but between us five my son Sep is spending his Christmas—ah—at Windsor."

"At Windsor?" exclaimed Foozle. "At the Castle?"

"Sh-h!" replied Mr. Pepstone, waving the subject away. "Not a word, my little man. Not a word, please, my dear Talkington. My lad's school-fellows might—ah—be jealous, don't you know?"

"Oh, I shall not mention it," replied Foozle's pater, but his voice sounded a trifle short. "Oh, no. Good-night!"

On our way to bed a few minutes later Foozle never opened his lips. He turned in without a word. He scowled at the Poet when he tried to say something about Pepstone. Foozle had begun to think. He was still moody the next morning. But he cycled off to the village after breakfast, on a few errands for his mater. For next day, Christmas Eve, the Talkingtons were giving a big party; a Christmas tree; Sir Roger de Coverley; romps; and everything in the good old-fashioned style you read about. The Poet and I wanted to ride down with Foozle, but he wouldn't have us at any price.

So we got another dose of Pepstone. He refused to try a lesson in jiu-jitsu, and being guests, you see, we couldn't rag him. We just had to surrender, while he took charge of us, and patronised, and bored, and bounded—and worked "my boy Septimus" to death. But I fancy Foozle's people were grateful that we kept the brute away from them. They might have found it hard to remember they were his hosts if they'd heard him sneering at St. Oliver's and themselves, and everything and everybody—except the Family Pepstone. But our Christmas holidays looked like being spoiled, anyhow.

On Friday, the day of the party, our spirits

picked up a little. By luncheon, when we had been reinforced by two of Foozle's cousins and the rector's family from Applegarth, the Poet and I had begun to feel less squashed. But all that meal Foozle insisted on singing the praises of Mr. Pepstone's son, publishing what a wonder he was, and appealing constantly to Pepstone Senior for confirmation.

"That's right, isn't it, Mr. Pepstone?"

"What's up, Ringley?" exclaimed Mr. Talkington.

"Great Scott! I *am* so sorry, pater. I've a telegram here that I ought to have given you two hours ago. I took it from the boy at the gates, and—and—I must have forgotten it. Here it is."

He drew out one of the familiar orange envelopes and passed it to his father.

The old man put his specs on, tore open the

In rushed a clumsy youth, with flaxen hair and round spectacles, and flung himself on Mr. Pepstone's neck.

"Yes, my little man, that's so."

But suddenly, in the very midst of telling how Pepstone Junior ran the hundred in nine and four-fifths dead, Foozle broke off, jumped up, and clapped his hand to his pocket. "Great Scott!" he cried. Of course, the whole table stopped to stare at him.

envelope, read the wire, and re-read it. Then he beamed down the table to Mr. Pepstone, sitting by his hostess at the other end.

"Hurray, Pepstone!" he cried in his jolly old voice. "Hurray! Here's fine news for us! Pass it down to Mr. Pepstone, boys."

He handed the wire to me, all open as it

was, to pass along. I couldn't help seeing what the message was:—

To Talkington, Grove House, Wyvelidore.

Have permission to spend Christmas with my father. Arriving at Wyvelidore by next train. Will you receive me?

Septimus Pepstone, Junior.

"He's got his father's cheek, anyhow!" murmured the Poet, when I told him.

I watched Mr. Pepstone as he read the telegram. For a second he appeared puzzled and startled. But next moment, crushing the flimsy paper savagely, he jumped to his feet.

"Oh, no, Talkington! I couldn't hear of it. The rogue, inviting himself in this manner. You've enough here already."

"The more the merrier, Pepstone," cried old Talkington. "Can't have too full a house at Christmas-time! Delighted to welcome your lad."

"Rather!" seconded Foozle, quietly.

"Ah! but I must teach him manners, teach him manners," persisted Mr. Pepstone. "We're a retiring folk, we Pepstones; I couldn't dream of such intrusion, such intrusion, Talkington. I'll run to the post office. I'll wire him to go off—oh—to his aunt's."

Foozle had taken out his watch. "I'm afraid it's too late now, sir; it's two o'clock," he remarked, demurely. "You see, I forgot the wire, sir. Your son will just be about here by now."

Mr. Pepstone pushed his chair away, waving his huge hands. "Then may I have the trap, Talkington? I'll turn the young trespasser back. Prepost——"

Foozle's mater laid her hand upon his sleeve. "No, really, Mr. Pepstone, that's ridiculous," she smiled. "We shall all be so very glad to see your boy."

At which moment we heard the butler's voice in the hall; there came a tap on the door; and in rushed a stubby, clumsy youth, with very flaxen hair, and round spectacles. He threw himself on Septimus Pepstone's neck.

"Dad!" he gasped, in a hoarse voice. "Dear old dad! How *are* you?"

Athletic? Well, the new comer scarcely suggested that. And his manner wasn't quite consistent with all the swagger places he visited at. But he seemed amazingly fond of Mr. Pepstone.

Old Pepstone simply loathed it. I suppose he felt embarrassed with such demonstrative affection. I caught him frowning hard at his son while all of us were shaking hands with him. Nor did young Sep seem altogether at ease. But Foozle came to his rescue, heaping his plate up with chicken and cold turkey, and imploring him to make a top-hole lunch. "At least, if you're not in training for the hundred, you know," he questioned, anxiously.

Apparently, young Pepstone was *not* in training. He seemed to relish Foozle's attention, which was tireless; much more flattering than any he'd bestowed upon the Poet and me. Old Pepstone sat on pins and needles, watching the Crichton eat.

Directly he'd finished his father tried to carry him away. But Foozle wouldn't hear of it.

"Oh, no, sir," he begged. "We haven't got to know him yet," with a sign to the rector's son to back him up.

"He's tired," growled Mr. Pepstone.

"No, I'm all right, thanks," cried his prodigy.

But his father would not leave him to our society. The closer we all stuck, the more he hung about us. So there we sat round him in the billiard-room; the rector's party, the girl cousins, Foozle, the Poet, myself, and Mr. Pepstone. You never knew such an afternoon!

Presently Mr. Pepstone tried again. "You must be tired, Sep," he insisted, wiping his greasy cheeks. "You'd like to lie down. You're not very strong, you know."

"Not very strong! But—that hundred, sir!" cried Foozle.

"And his bowling average!" screamed the rector's son.

"And his batting!"

"And his maths!"

"And his classics!"

"And the five miles he swam at Dover!"

At this reminder of his son's mental and physical magnificence Mr. Pepstone flamed scarlet. But he recovered himself with one of his great guffaws. "Eh, my little men, but that's different," he laughed. "Train travelling always tires Sep. Doesn't it, Sep, my boy?"

"No, dad, not now," muttered the invalid.

His father stared hard at him. "Your face is filthy, my lad. You want a wash and brush-up," he continued, firmly. "Come, I'll take you to my room."

"I had a scrub at the station, thanks, dad."

Mr. Pepstone's agitation grew. "The station!" he exclaimed, throwing his huge hands up. "Great mercy! At the station!" He looked round wildly. "My poor, poor lad, what *have* you done?"

"Eh?" gasped the youth.

"Small pox—scarlet fever—German measles

—mumps—you catch 'em all at stations," moaned Mr. Pepstone, edging nearer to his reckless treasure. "Quick! Off with you at once! You risk these precious lives!"

But Foozle didn't seem at all alarmed. He moved between Mr. Pepstone and his prey.

"Oh, thanks, but we're not nervous, sir," he smiled. "Besides, they're awfully careful at Wyveldore, aren't they, Jimmy?"

"No, no! Nine and four-fifths, Sep, my boy," broke in Mr. Pepstone, hastily.

"I mean nine and four-fifths, dad. Well, you fellows, it was this way——"

"Please, I'd much rather hear about the ten M.C.C. wickets that you clean bowled in one innings," interrupted Foozle's pretty cousin Marjory.

"Eh? What ten wickets? No, I mean,

"Now watch me very carefully," said Foozle. "I place the watch in the hat—so!"

"You bet!" answered the rector's son. "They're whales on disinfectants!"

"I say, do tell us, young Pepstone," broke in the Poet, "how it feels to be a sprinter."

The champion tittered sheepishly.

"But honestly. When you won that hundred, you know— were you puffed?"

"Ah, that hundred," smirked young Sep. "When I found I'd done eight and a fifth——"

"No, no! Nine and four-fifths, Sep, my boy," broke in Mr. Pepstone, hastily.

"I mean nine and four-fifths, dad. Well, you fellows, it was this way——"

"Please, I'd much rather hear about the ten M.C.C. wickets that you clean bowled in one innings," interrupted Foozle's pretty cousin Marjory.

"Eh? What ten wickets? No, I mean, I've—er—taken all ten wickets so often, you know," said Septimus. "I do it every match."

"No, no; only twice, my lad," broke in Pepstone Senior once again. "Only twice, Sep."

"Well, a chap can't remember all those trifles," giggled the athlete, with an echo of his father's manner. "Why, till you mentioned it just now, I'd clean forgotten about those

fifteen miles I paddled before breakfast at,——"

"Five miles, Sep, my boy. *Five* miles."

And then the Poet must go and spoil it. He gurgled horribly. It a jiffy Mr. Pepstone had collared his son at last.

"You shall lie down, Sep," he insisted. "To be fresh for the party to-night. Now, come along."

The other hung back bashfully. And luckily for him that very moment a maid entered with the tea-tray, and behind her Foozle's matter.

"I want to talk to Mrs. Tallington, please," whimpered the captive. And down he plopped on a stool by that lady's side. Of course, old Pepstone couldn't drag him from there. But I caught him scowling horribly when he heard that Sep had been quartered in Foozle's room, and would change for dinner there.

That Mr. Pepstone should be keen on getting his son to himself for a few minutes was natural enough; the funny part was Septimus Junior's obvious anxiety to frustrate the pious intention. He avoided all attempts at a *tête-à-tête*. And the Poet and I, tumbling to his game, backed him up for all we were worth. It seemed time to get a little of our own back on Mr. Pepstone. So we stuck to Sep like flies to a honey-pot, till the guests began to pour in for the dinner. Then we could breathe freely.

No time to tell you of the high old time we had. After dinner came the Christmas tree, with a present for everybody, and Sir Roger and blind man's buff. Then we made asses of ourselves—as a man doesn't mind doing once a year—at all the sillier games. Foozle's pater was the life and soul of these, and at first Mr. Pepstone, in a real bad temper over something or other, tried to air his sarcasm at his host's expense. He sneered at old Foozle's childishness and so forth. But the others wouldn't stand it, so Pepstone turned round and chummed to be fearfully juvenile, guffawing all the time. He reminded me of an elephant in a nursery. The sport being that the Poet and I knew jolly well that he was boiling inwardly. Young Sep capered about in tremendous form.

At last the carriages began to come and the guests to go, till only ourselves and the cousins and the rector's family—all staying overnight—were left. But we didn't want to turn in. (You never do.) We'd quite enough to keep the pot boiling.

"I say, doesn't anyone know a new game?" cried Marjory.

There was no reply. (There never is.)

So she began to cross-examine each in turn, till she reached Foozle. "I'm sure, Ringley, you know one, anyhow."

Foozle blinked at her.

"Yes," he lisped at last. "I do know something we haven't tried."

"Hurray!"

"Let's have it!"

"What is it?"

"What is it?" echoed Foozle, looking awfully bored. "Well, it's a bit of everything. Conjuring—illusion—magic—and all that sort of rot."

Marjory clapped her hands. "I love conjuring!" she cried.

Then Foozle woke up. He counted heads; everyone was there.

"Now," he began, briskly, "I want a sheet, a round table, and one small chair. Thank you, Marjory. Put the other chairs in rows over by the door, please. And now—let's see—now I want Pepstone."

Old Pepstone lumbered across to him.

"No, not you, sir—your son Septimus. That's right—up here, please, Pepstone Minor." And turning to the company. "All the rest of you go out of the room, please. Come back when I call you, and mind you shut the door behind you."

In ten minutes he recalled us. We found that he had curtained off the far corner with his sheet, and was standing in front of it, by the little table. But when we were all seated, lo! Pepstone Junior had disappeared.

"Where's my boy Sep?" cried Mr. Pepstone.

"You're sure you left him here with me, ain't you, sir?" said Foozle.

"I am," said Mr. Pepstone.

"Then one moment, sir." He turned back his sleeves, as conjurors often do. "Ladies and gentlemen," in a fine professional manner—"I shall endeavour to show you a little illusion which I have performed before none of the crowned heads of Asia Minor."

"Ha, ha, ha!" jackassed Mr. Pepstone. "Capital, my little man!"

Foozle rewarded him with a sweet smile. "In this illusion," he went on, "there is more than meets the eye. It is the triumph of matter over mind. It is the last surviving link between our times and the necromancy of early Roma. *Arma virumque cano.*"

"Gosh!" whispered the Poet. "Where did he crib all that?"

"Ladies and gentlemen all. Gaul is divided into three parts, and I must ask you, if you

please, to sit very, very still. The least rustle will disturb the influence. And whatever happens—do not be alarmed. *Odi profanum vulgus!*"

"What do you *call* the trick?" guffawed Mr. Pepstone.

Foozle grasped his forehead with both hands, swaying from side to side. "Hist!" he murmured, in a strange far-away voice.

"But what do you call it?" yelled the bore again.

"The Swankoscope!" The wizard purred the name with a gentler smile than ever. "Ah, Poet, fetch me a top-hat, please."

The Poet obeyed.

"And now a watch, a gold watch, *if you please*. Perhaps, Mr. Pepstone, you'll kindly lend me yours?"

"Not I!" yelled Septimus P.

"Oh, please," pressed the wizard. "Yours is the most sympathetic to the influence. It is, truly."

With mystic gestures he declined the others proffered.

"Not I!" repeated Mr. Pepstone.

But Marjory came to Foozle's rescue. She jumped up and threw her arms round the surly beggar's neck. "Oh, Mr. Pepstone, do," she begged. "Or you'll spoil the trick." We all backed her up, you bet, and so, of course, he had to yield. Very slowly he detached the watch from its chain, and handed it to Foozle.

"Thank you, Mr. Pepstone. Now mark! I place the watch into the hat—so."

Then Foozle raised the old topper very carefully in both his hands, and bearing it aloft before his nose marched twice round his improvised platform, chanting an incantation. The third time he dodged behind his curtain.

"Any ass could do that!" sneered Mr. Pepstone.

Foozle emerged. He still held the hat high in front of him. Very gently, as if afraid of hurting it, he put it down, brim uppermost, upon the table. Then he stooped, and peered into it.

"Oh!" he gasped, sharply. "Oh!"

He was facing us in manifest alarm. Something had given him a shock.

"Great Scott!" he cried. "It's terrible!"

But with an effort he appeared to pull himself together.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry," he confessed, smiling feebly. "It doesn't seem to act."

He extended the hat to us. It was empty.

"But my watch? My watch, you little toad!" yelled Mr. Pepstone. "Where's my watch?"

"I'm sorry," stuttered Foozle again. "But the trick's—gone wrong—somehow!"

"Hang the trick!" screamed the angry brute. "Hang your trick! I want my watch. You're a thief, sir! You're a thief!" Mr. Pepstone was showing his nasty nature properly.

At the last expression old Talkington jumped to his feet, but Foozle motioned him back with an imploring look. The rest of us sat horrified.

"Oh, I was talking of my trick, Mr. Pepstone," Foozle lisped. "Your watch? That's all right. You'll find it round the neck of my school chum, Grabbles."

"Of whom?" cried his pater. "Of *whom*, Ringley?"

"Of Grabbles, sir."

"But Grabbles is miles and miles away," cried poor old Talkington. "Come, Ringley, the joke's gone far enough. Return Mr. Pepstone his watch."

"With pleasure, sir."

Foozle turned sharply, and pulled away the sheet. Behind it—on a chair—reposed Grabbles. In one hand he was grasping a big flaxen wig. In the other a pair of round spectacles. By a ribbon round his neck hung Mr. Pepstone's watch.

* * * * *

That was the end of the Swankoscope—the great illusion trick. And it was the end—at Wyveldore—of Mr. Septimus Pepstone. There and then he bolted off to bed. And next morning he bolted back to London.

A man should never belittle and patronise his hosts, and brag about his own wonderful possessions—unless he possesses them. He shouldn't blow the trumpet of a genius of a son—if he has no son. If he does, and lo! to his astonishment the marvel turns up in the flesh—there's certain to be trouble.

"Jove! You're splendid, Foozle!" exclaimed the Poet, when Septimus Pepstone was in bed.

"But how did you manage it, Ringley? How did you manage?" Mr. Talkington could not forgive the prank at once. (But Mrs. Talkington sat smiling happily.)

"Simple as A.B.C., sir!" lisped Foozle. "I guessed jolly well that the bounder was a braggart and hadn't a son—directly I saw how surprised you were to hear of him. Besides—was it likely? Would anybody, Pepstone or not, be such an all-round marvel? And fancy—a Pepstone staying at Windsor! Confront

him with a bogus son, thought I, and either he must confess himself a liar or swallow it as best he can. If he confesses, he's shown up. If he doesn't, I'll show him up worse still. But I guessed, too, sir, that he'd never have the moral courage to disown Grabbles here."

"But why so bitter, Ringley?" cried the old man. "Why?"

"Because he bounced so, and he bragged so, and he lied. But more because the beast had the cheek, sir, to—er—patronise you and the mater. That settled him, sir."

"Oh, Ringley!" murmured Mrs. Talkington.

"When I cycled down to the village on Thursday," continued Foozle, "I wrote to a friend of mine at Windsor, with a draft of the telegram you received, telling him to be sure and wire it off next morning. Then I sent a wire to Grabbles here, telling him to come on Friday—most imperative and urgent. He'd written that he was having a beastly dull time at his guardian's, so I knew he'd rather spend Christmas Eve and Day with us——"

"Rather!" grunted Grabbles, who felt himself a hero.

"On Friday, pater, I intercepted your telegram at the gates, met old Grabbie at the station, fitted him up with the wig and glasses, and coached him in his part."

"I'm dashed if I could remember all those beastly records," growled Grabbles. "I knew I'd mess them."

"I smuggled him up to the stables, and told him to lie low there till the clock in the yard struck two. Then he was to present himself. You played the part grandly, Grabbie!"

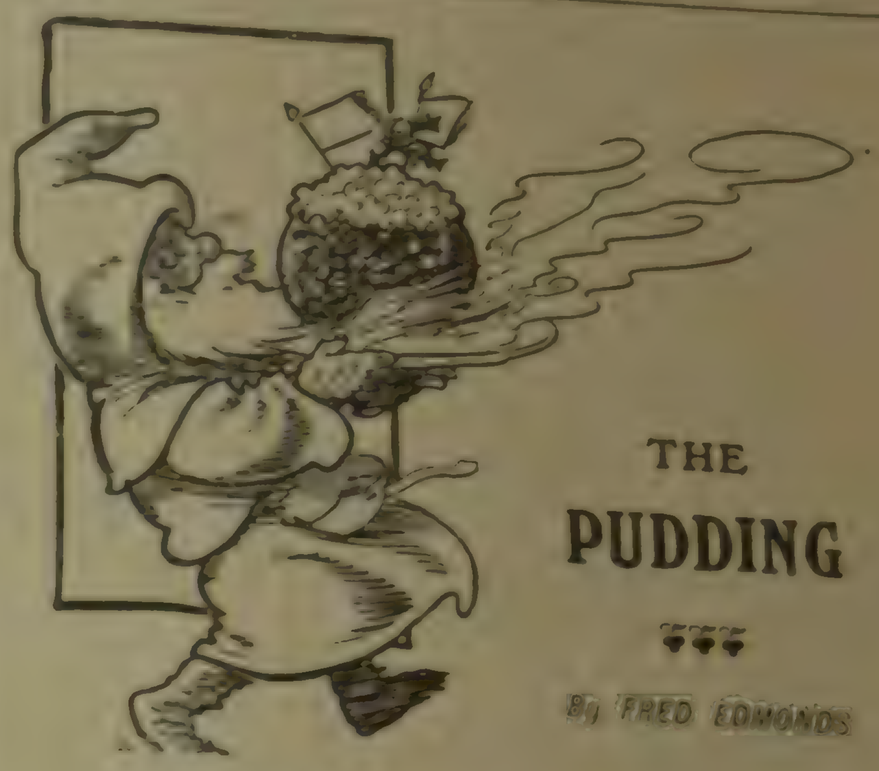
Grabbles blushed scarlet. He always blushed when Foozle praised him. "And anyhow, pater," concluded Foozle, "I spoof that Pepstone brute to some extent. I might have rubbed it in a good bit thicker. But I waited till all the outside people had gone, you know, before I showed him up."

But I don't mind admitting, now, that no sooner had the Poet and I set eyes on "my boy Sep" than we recognised something suspiciously familiar about the figure of him. Still, it wasn't our business, was it? It was Septimus Pepstone's business to acknowledge him or not. Nobody else was likely to smell a rat.

Why?

Because they'd never seen Grabbles.

THE END.

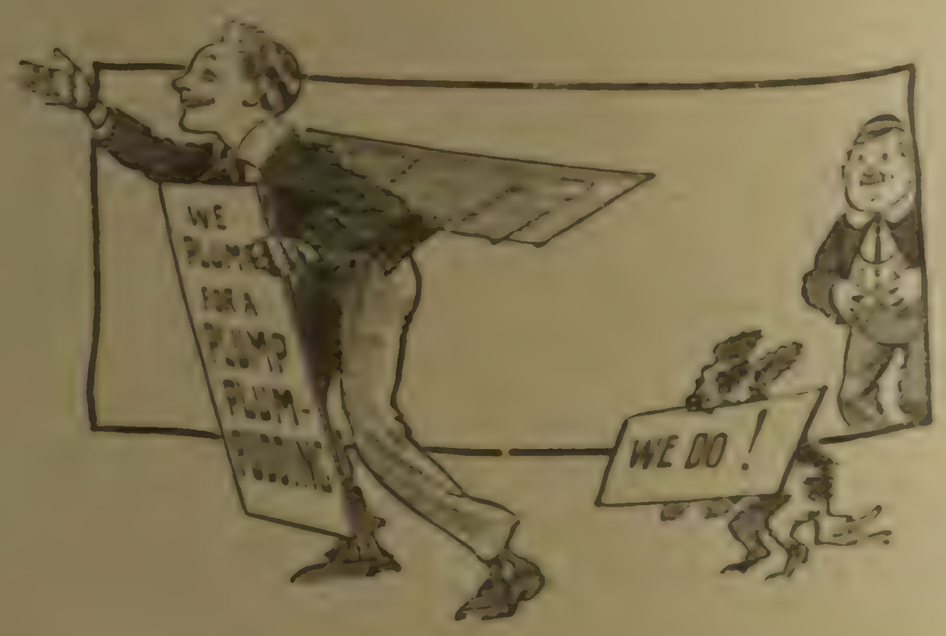


THE PUDDING

By FRED EDMONDS

Now Christmas is here
It tells of good cheer,
And somebody's goose will be cooked, say you,
While expectant kids
Are lifting the lids,
Which cover a feast of good things from view;
But no matter what
We have or have not,
We plump for a plump plum-pudding, we do!

We revel in jam,
And turkey and ham,
And oranges, figs, and snapdragon too:
We quaff with a cheer
The bright ginger-beer,
Or no matter what that is wholesome to brew:
But chiefest of all,
In the old dining-hall
We plump for a plump plum-pudding, we do!



MODELS & MODEL MAKING

By HENRY GREENLY

Mr. Greenly, who is admittedly one of the greatest experts on model-making in the world, will be pleased to give any assistance he possibly can to Captainites interested in this splendid hobby. So if you are in doubt upon any point, or want any information whatever, write to him for advice, c/o "The Captain office."

MAKING A MODEL SINGLE EXPRESS LOCOMOTIVE.

MANY a beginner essays to build a model locomotive, but the difficulties and expense which the desire for a *working* model entails often acts as a deterrent, and although the desire lingers, the constructive abilities of the amateur are expended in other directions.

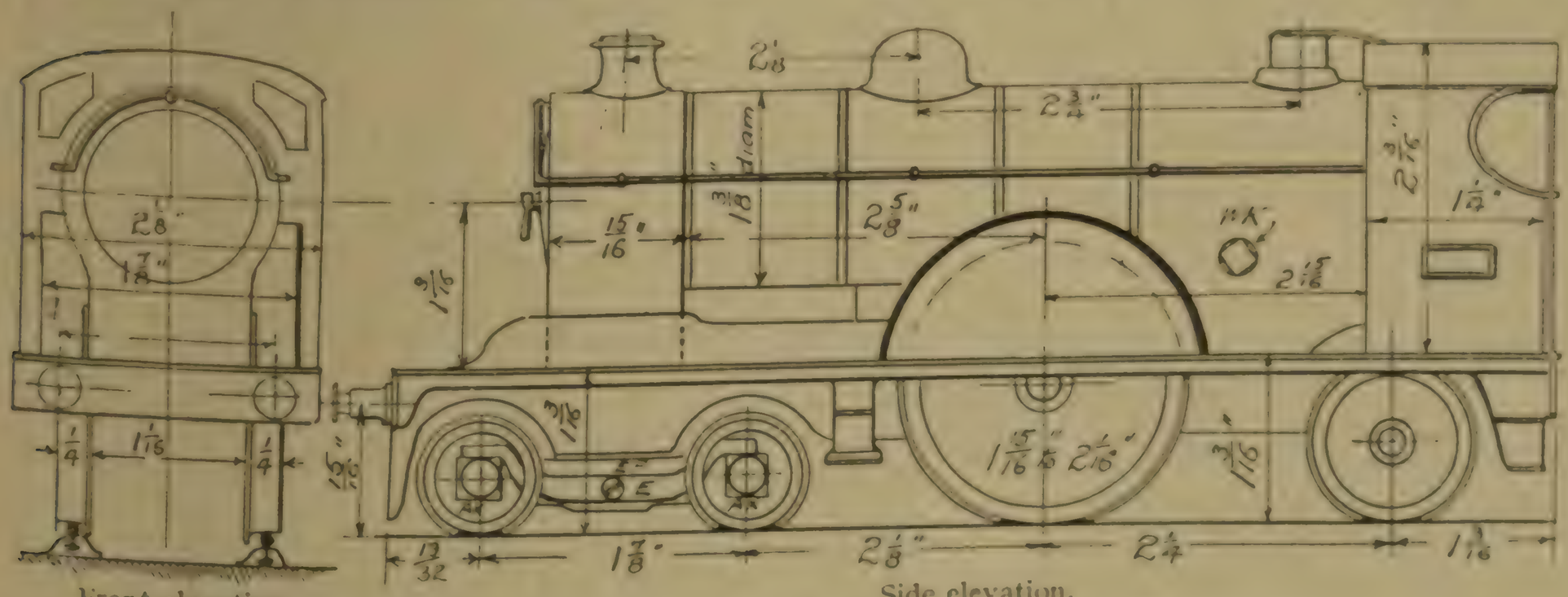
Skilled mechanics can, of course, produce satisfactory working model steam locomotives in No. 0 (1¼in.) and No. 1 (1¾in.) gauges. The smallest scale recommended to the amateur builder of a steam loco is $\frac{7}{16}$in. to the foot, *i.e.*, the scale adopted for the popular 2in. gauge. Boilers for such models are, however, of no use unless well and soundly made, and to accomplish this rather costly appliances, to say nothing of the skill, are required. Cylinders if purchased in a finished state are comparatively expensive. Therefore, unless the beginner can face an expenditure of two or three sovereigns he will relinquish the idea of a steam model for the time being.

The making of a locomotive, however, need not be abandoned. Choosing, for instance, No. 0 gauge, a very pretty model may be built, and it may be arranged to work with either a clockwork or electric mechanism. These mechanisms can be purchased separately from about 5*s*. or 6*s*., the greater choice being available in clockwork motors. Or an old clockwork engine may have its mechanism withdrawn to fit inside one with a more pretentious and imposing superstructure.

Our design (Fig. 1) shows a very suitable type of locomotive for the purpose. It is representative of the latest developments of the "single wheeled" express engines on the Great Central Railway.

We have chosen an engine of this type because in No. 0 gauge clockwork locomotives run best with the least complication of parts, and unless heavy loads are required to be hauled a single express engine will give the longest possible run at one winding up of the spring.

The characteristic of a clockwork motor as



Front elevation. Side elevation.

FIG. 1.—External arrangements of No. 0 gauge model single express locomotive.

supplied for model locomotives would appear to be that in the various qualities the length of run does not vary very much, but the better the quality the greater is the tractive effort available. Now if a long run is the leading consideration, then the best scheme is to obtain the most powerful mechanism and to gear it up by using a large driving wheel. Of course, the tractive effort will be reduced in the same proportion, but the better quality of the clock-work and the stronger spring will make up for this, and the engine will pull just as much as one fitted with smaller wheels and a less powerful clockwork motor.

As in real practice the tractive effort should never be excessive—one-fourth of the weight on the driving wheels, *i.e.*, adhesive weight, is the correct proportion. Therefore, in making a single-wheeled model with a good clock-work motor a large driving wheel is essential, otherwise the wheels will "slip." A small wheel requires coupling to other wheels.

Fig. 2 is a sectional view of the model to be described, and shows the relative position of the clockwork motor in the boiler of the engine. When purchasing the clockwork motor it is as well, if the mechanism is of the best and most expensive quality, to ask the makers to remove the wheels supplied, allow for the same, and to fit a suitable pair of wheels about 2ins. diameter. This is more or less necessary as the axles of clockwork motors are generally screwed with a metric thread. If no lathe is available the other wheels necessary to the construction of the engine may be obtained at the same time. In any case, the castings will be necessary, as the trouble of pattern making is out of the question just for one engine.

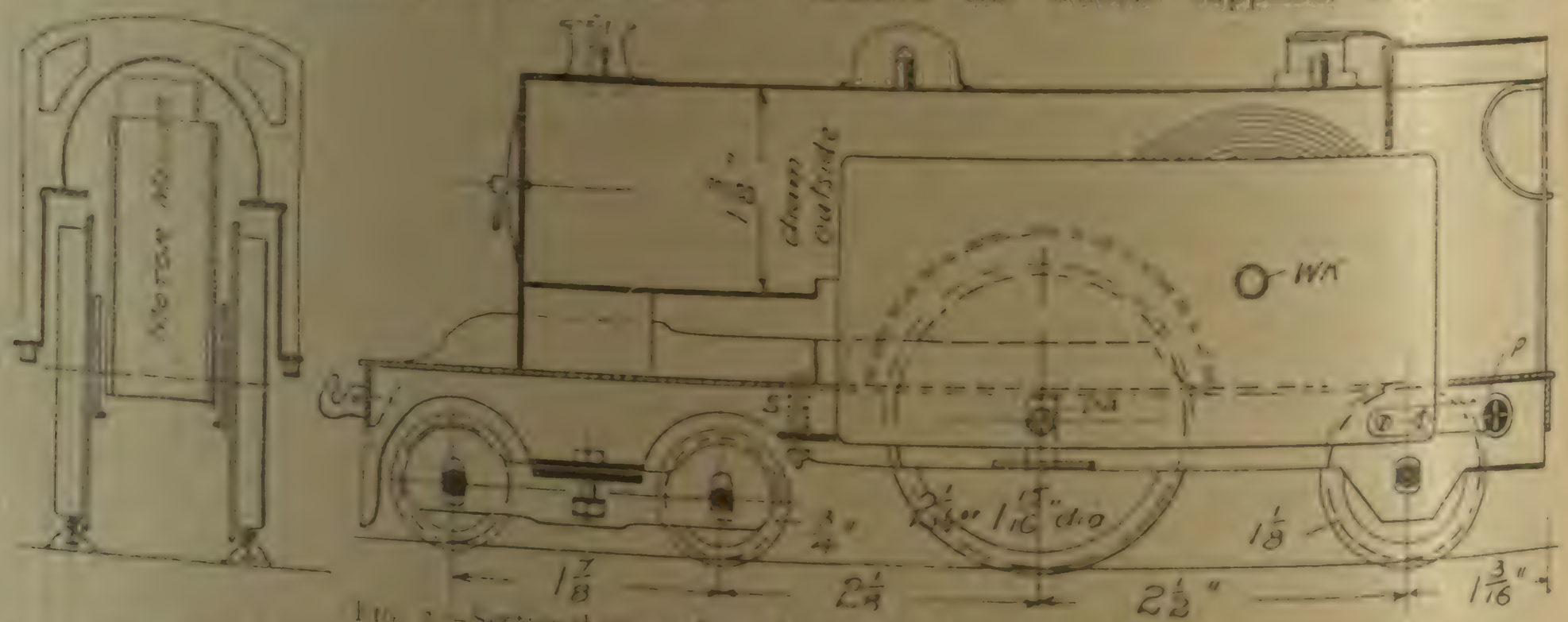
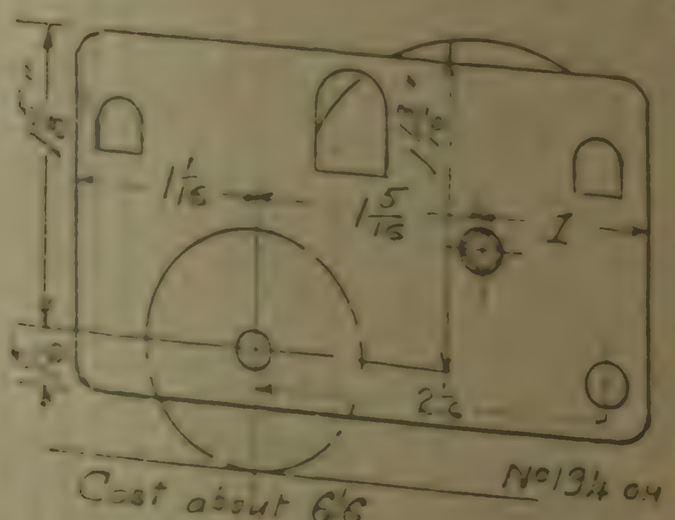


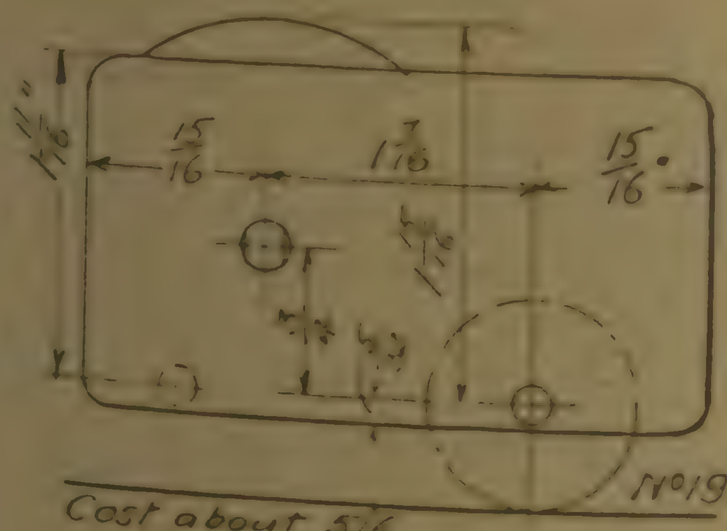
FIG. 2.—Sectional view of model with clockwork mechanism.

For the construction of the engine sheet tin may be used, but while this material is cheap it is more difficult to work. The characteristic of tin-plate is that it is a trouble to flatten if once bent, and unless very carefully cut and shaped the surfaces will remain in wrinkles, which will show even when the model is painted.

Sheet brass is very much better, and although it costs twice as much, the amount of metal used is so small in an "o" gauge model that the extra cost may be neglected. No. 20 gauge stuff is plenty thick enough, as in all clockwork models undue weight is to be avoided. Soft rolled brass should be chosen, as "hard" brass is like tin-plate, difficult to hammer flat if it once becomes bent or twisted.

It will be noticed in Fig. 2 that the motor is arranged to work on springs. This is an important feature. As there is only one pair of driving wheels, means must be provided to ensure that they are always properly bearing on the rails, and do not, as





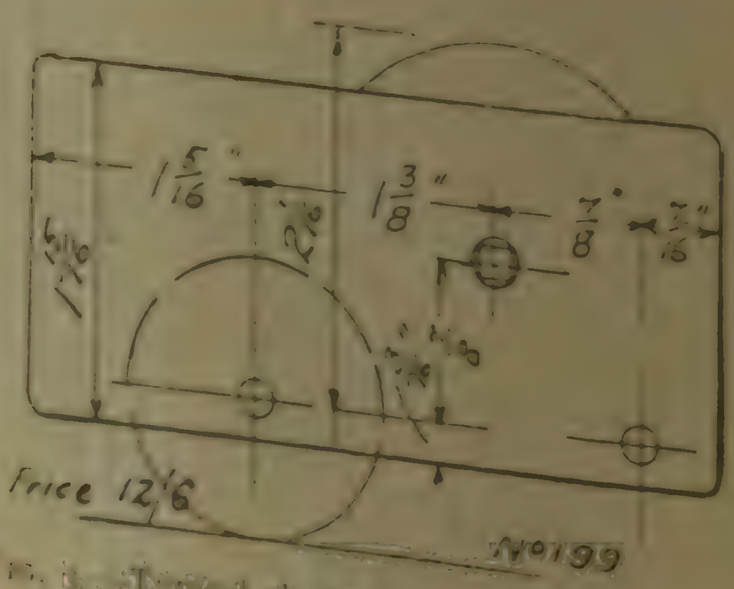


FIG. 3.—Typical clockwork locomotives with dimensions and approximate prices.

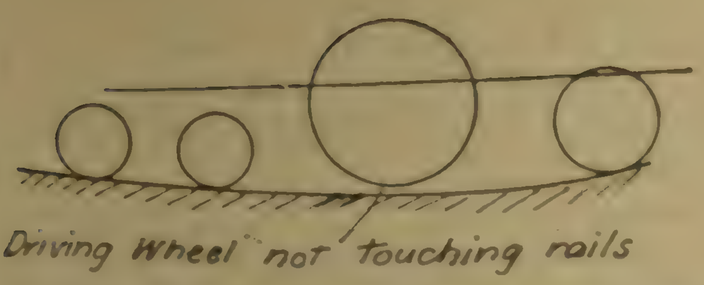


FIG. 4.—Showing the effect of an unlevel road on an unsprung engine.

indicated in Fig. 4, spin round in mid air when the locomotive happens to traverse a concave piece of track.

The scheme proposed in the model under consideration is to screw a bracket to the back of the motor—the exact arrangement depends on the particular piece of clockwork mechanism employed—and to pivot this to the frames at the extreme rear end of the engine, as shown at P in Fig. 2. At the other end a piece of flat metal is arranged to stick out horizontally from the motor and fit over a stud (S, Fig. 2), a light spiral spring intervening between the projecting arm on the motor and the engine footplate. A nut should be fitted to end of the screwed stud to retain the motor in place when the engine is lifted up. Here again, however, the actual construction of this part of the model will require modification to suit the mechanism, as both

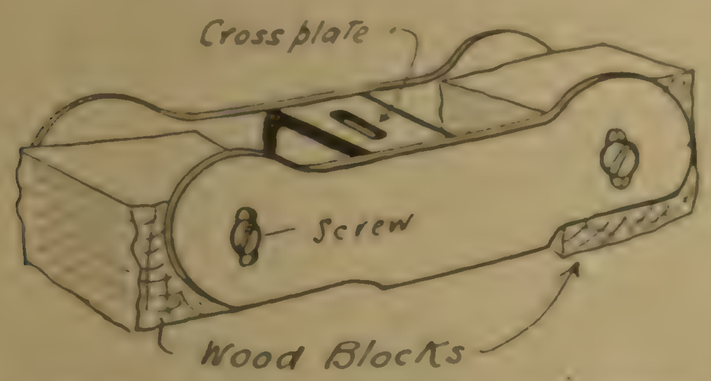


FIG. 6.—Building up the bogie frames.

the brakes and the reversing gear are at this end.

As skill in model making is only obtainable by practice in building a model, the beginner should first attempt the less important parts. In the present model the bogie may form the first task. The main frame-plates of the bogie are of the shape shown in Fig. 5. They should be cut out together, two plates of brass of the maximum over all size being cut out of the sheet with a pair of shears, hammered flat, and then riveted together. Two $\frac{1}{16}$in. rivets will be ample, and they may be arranged in an unimportant position. The shape should then be marked out from the drawing and the holes for the axles drilled and filed out to slot form with a small round or "rat-tail" file. The cross stretcher may be a piece of the same brass sheet bent over to fit inside each frame-plate, and of such a width that the bogie is not more than $\frac{3}{4}$in. wide over all when finished.

The hole in the top of the bogie stretcher for the bogie pin should be a slot about $\frac{1}{2}$in. long and $\frac{1}{8}$in. wide. This may be made by drilling a row of bare $\frac{1}{8}$in. holes and filing them

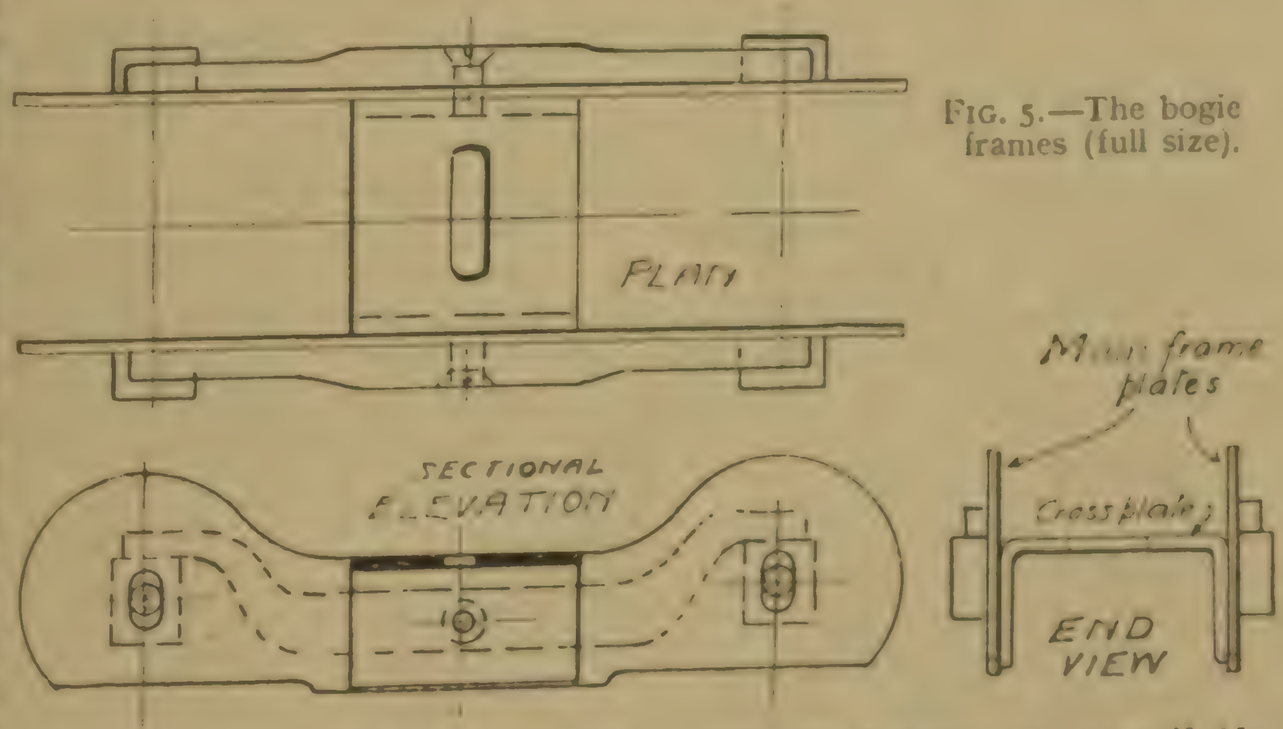


FIG. 5.—The bogie frames (full size).

into one another with the aforesaid rat-tail file.

To provide for the inequalities of the road a device which the writer has used with success for years may be adopted. It consists of what is known as an equalising bar, to each end of which is soldered an axle-box. Of course, the whole may be made from the one piece of stuff. If this is done care must be exercised to see that the axle-boxes are wider than the equalising bar, otherwise the bar will rub on the tyres unless the boss of bogie wheels is turned so that it projects slightly. The axle-boxes are drilled for the axles, and the centre of the equaliser drilled with a hole to suit the size of the pivot screw. Before fitting the wheels and axles and the equalisers the frames must be soldered together. To accomplish this successfully and easily a block of wood

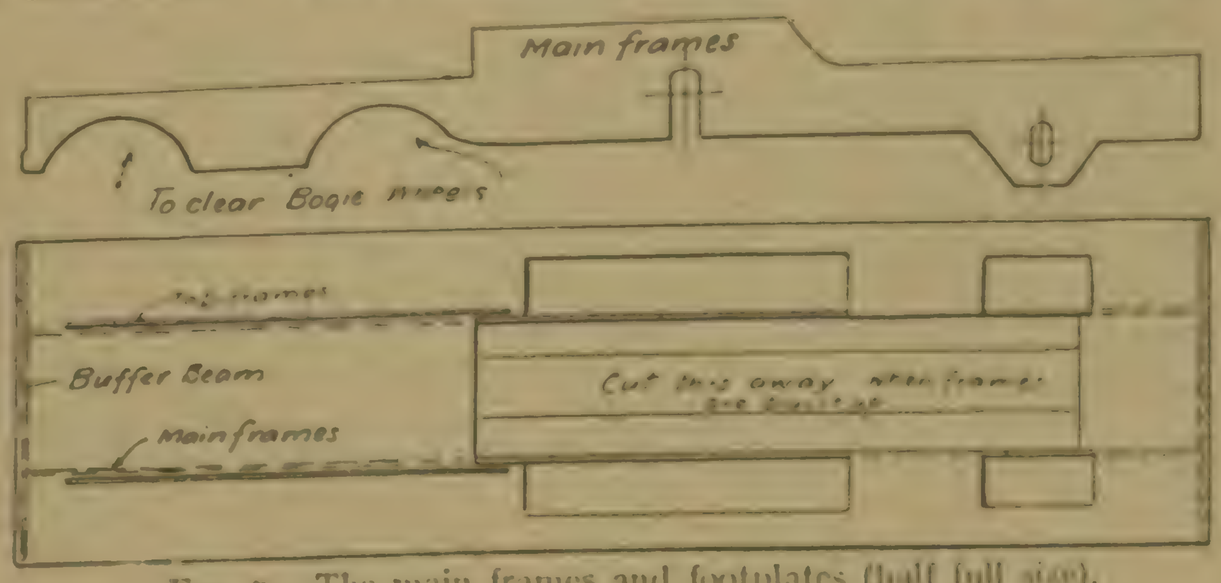


FIG. 7.—The main frames and footplates (half full size).

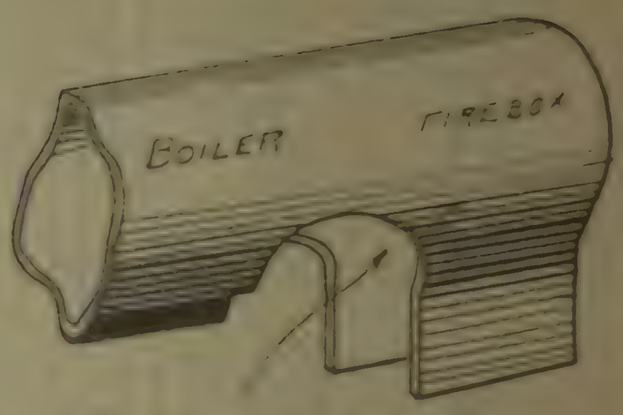


FIG. 6.—The boiler barrel, showing arrangement at fire-box end.

The main frames are of similar material, and run the whole length of the locomotive. They should certainly not be more but slightly less than 11in. wide outside when put together. However, this is another point in which the exact width of the clockwork motor must be considered. Also, they need not extend above the footplate level except at the driving wheels, as shown in Fig. 7. The footplate may be in one piece, a slot being cut in it to clear the clockwork motor and driving wheels, as shown in the detail drawing. As the amount of metal cut away in the centre of the footplates is considerable a certain portion may be left until the main frames are fitted on and soldered. This is indicated by the centre part in the sketch, Fig. 7. The superfluous metal can easily be removed with a knife-edge file.

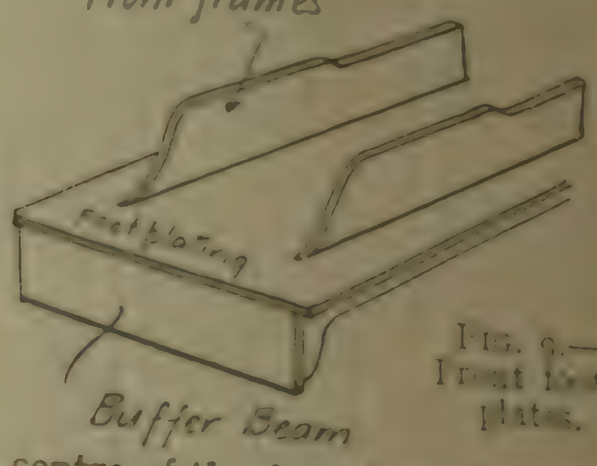


FIG. 9.—Front footplates.

As in a No. 0 gauge model locomotive the main frames cannot be to scale in the matter of width, the frame-plates above boiler are entirely separate. They consist simply of two plates cut to the shape shown and soldered on to the footplates 1 1/4ins. apart.

The boiler barrel may be of wood, but as in the larger mechanisms a fair amount of room is usually required inside the boiler, it will be found best to make it of metal. For this latter method of construction a piece of the lightest brass tube (1 3/4ins. diameter) obtainable should be procured. It must be cut down at the fire-box end and opened out, as shown in Fig. 8. A part of this fire-box side so formed must be cut to the profile of the driving wheel splasher, which is like half the lid of a tin, and may, if no tin lid of the right size is available, be made up ready cut of brass sheet before the boiler is operated on. A further portion of the bottom of the boiler barrel behind the splasher may have to be cut away to clear the mechanism, the amount depending, of course, on the size of the clockwork motor used. At the front end the smoke-box is formed by soldering a plate on the front of the tube, the edge of which must be filed or turned true, the shape of the smoke-box, and wrapping a sheet of thin metal over it, as indicated in the sketches. The half tin lids (splashers) may then be soldered down to the footplates and the boiler fitted over it, and when right down in place and square, soldered to the splashers and front top frames.

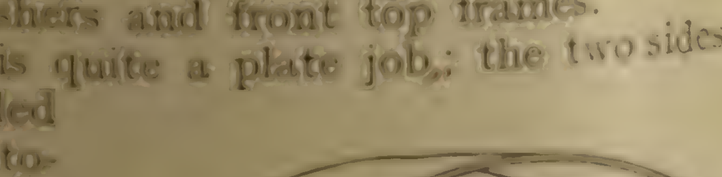


FIG. 10.—Springing device for trailing end.

The cab is quite a plate job; the two sides may be filed to shape together and soldered to the ends. The weather-board (the front) requires the windows piercing in it, and also a space in the centre to clear the mechanism. The roof is a plain square of metal bent to shape and soldered on. All soldering should be done from the inside, and to ensure a strong joint the edges should be clean, straight, and the iron should also be clean and at a good heat. Any good flux may be used. Killed spirits (chloride of zinc) works well. Resin is clean, but hardly free enough. There are several brands of soldering pastes on the market which are readily applied and give good results.

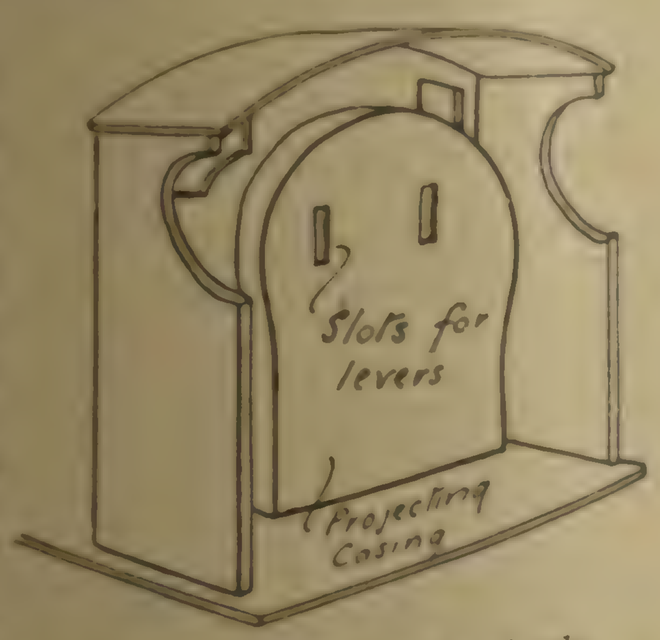


FIG. 11.—The inside of cab.

The trailing wheel may run in slotted bearings, and a

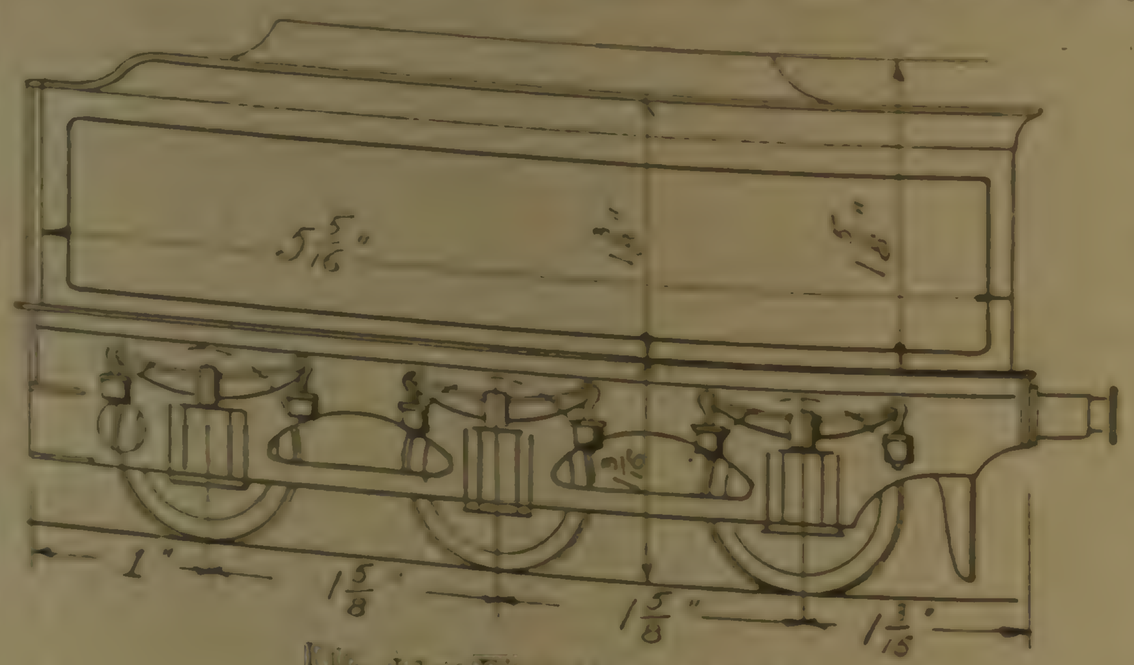


FIG. 12.—Elevation of tender.

certain degree of flexibility may be given to this axle by allowing some side play and also in arranging it on springs in the manner more clearly explained by the perspective sketch, Fig. 10.

The levers from the mechanism and which actuate the brake and reversing gear must be brought through to the cab, and if the part of the mechanism which projects through the cab is covered as shown in Fig. 11 holes must be bored to suit them.

The dome, the chimney, and the safety valve require turning. They may, of course,

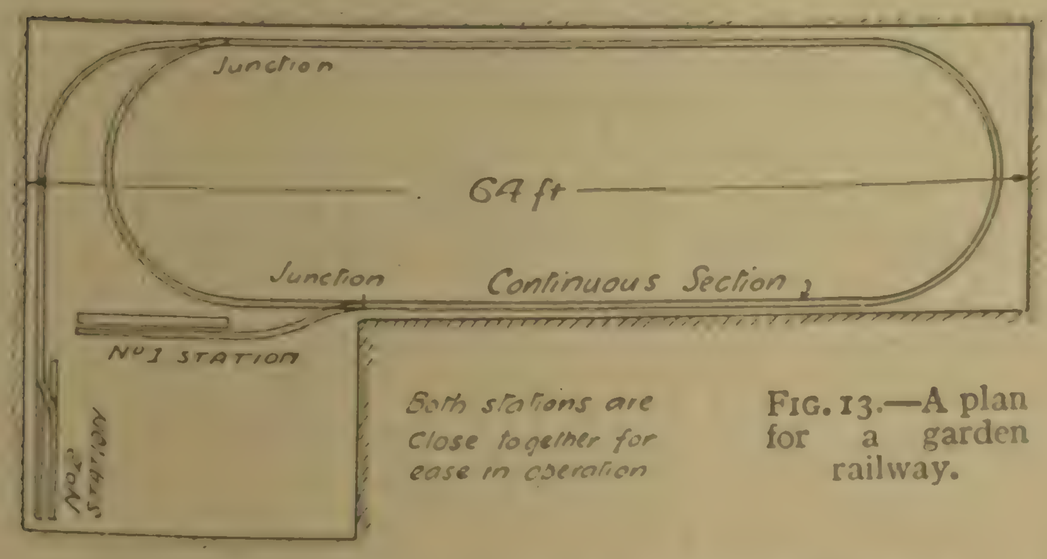


FIG. 13.—A plan for a garden railway.

be made in wood and stuck on small pegs of wire soldered on to the top of boiler.

The tender is a standard six-wheeled vehicle. The only feature of difficult construction is the correct imitation of the outside springs. However, if castings are out of the question, and the builder does not fancy cutting six springs separately out of rod brass, then the main frames may be placed inside the wheels, as in the London and Brighton engines. This will save a good deal of work.

Answers to Correspondents.

F. D. de B. (Montreal, Canada).—No, do not use such large cylinders under any circumstances. For a model 5in. gauge engine with a 5in. diameter boiler, cylinders 1¼in. by 2⅛in. or 1⅜in. by 2in. are the maximum I would advise. An injector is quite satisfactory on an engine of the size you are making, but I should certainly use a pump as well, or say, a second injector with a slightly different range of steam pressures.

H. Melville (Hamilton, Australia).—As your railway is not a permanent one it is hardly any use giving you a plan, as you can fit up any number of combinations with the rails at your disposal. I would advise you to obtain some of the books of rail formations supplied by model railway dealers.

Eric Shoosmith (Luton).—The old adage says, "Look not a gift horse in the mouth." But if you still think that a 2½in. gauge locomotive is much too big for your requirements you may ask permission to sell it and get a smaller one. However, 20ft. by 30ft. is quite a reasonable size for a 2½in. gauge line. The track, if you make it yourself (including points) from the loose material, will cost you no more per unit of length. I should, therefore, make it do, considering also that should you wish to build a successful steam engine at some later date 2½in. gauge will enable you to do so with less trouble. Trucks, also, require less skill to make in the larger sizes, although perhaps some of the metal parts are a little more expensive. I would recommend an indoor railway; at least, all complicated junctions and stations should be inside.

"Loco" (Nottingham).—(1) Write to our model locomotive advertisers for castings lists. (2) I cannot recommend a ½ or ¾ horse-power gas engine in an upper room. As you also intend to run an electric garden railway I would advise that the engine be placed on the ground floor away from the house, and to drive the tools in the workshop upstairs a small motor could be fitted near the lathe, and the current conducted by bare wires on insulators. (3) You can easily fit a No. 3 (2½in.) gauge line in the garden (64ft. by 15ft.). A steam railway requires at least 7ft. 6in. radius curves, and should have a continuous portion of track with, say, two terminal stations branching out of it. I include a suitable plan herewith. (4) Each firm has its particular merits. Study the catalogues carefully.

J. Connell (Busby).—It would appear that the "between tyre" distances are incorrect. Besides the gauge, which should at points and crossings be exactly 1¼ins. (on curves 1 5/16ins. is better), care must be taken to see that all the wheels are correct. I

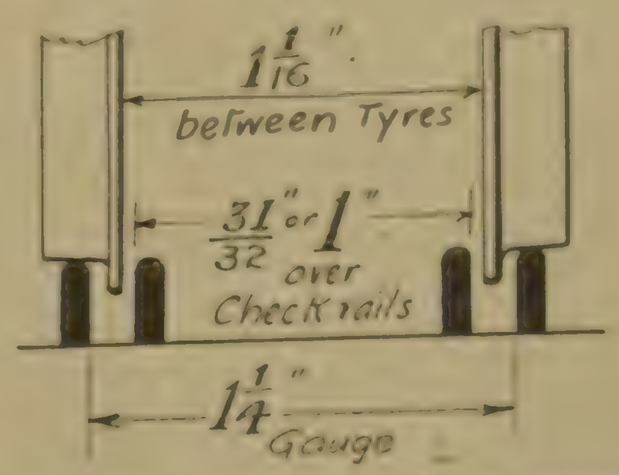


FIG. 14.—Standard wheel and rail dimensions for No. 0 gauge models.

append a full drawing. As you will see, the tyres should be exactly 1 1/16ins. apart. Check-rails should be 1in. over all—maximum, but 31/32in. will do.

R. D. P. (London).—In reply to your suggestion that the writer should advise you on the design of an electric engine (? motor) for a model aeroplane, it may be pointed out that although very light electro-motors can be made, we do not think that you would be at all satisfied with the results. Even if the power were supplied by a flexible wire from a battery or accumulator on the ground the weight for the power will be found to be excessive—with an accumulator the power per pound weight is very small. You will do much better with the more usual "elastic" motor.

THE LOST EXPLORER

A THRILLING TALE OF ADVENTURE IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH.

By John Mackie

Author of "The Heart of the Prairie," "The Rising of the Red Man," "Black Man's Reef," "In Search of Smith," etc., etc.

□ □ □

FOR NEW READERS

Eric Jardine, the hero and narrator of the tale, has accompanied his uncle, Dick Jardine, into the wild, unknown country of Tropical Australia, ostensibly to take up new land for grazing purposes, but in reality to search for an agent white man who has been seen with the wild blacks in the unknown interior. This man, whom Dick Jardine once caught a glimpse of, is said to be the great explorer, Dr. Ludwig Leichardt, who disappeared with a large party when attempting to cross Australia from east to west some forty years previously. Although the Government had offered thousands of pounds to anyone who would clear up the mystery of his fate, no traces of the vanished party had ever come to light. Under the protection of Eric's party is a little native, Nick, whom the savages are very anxious to recover. Nick, however, pleads not to be given back to them. The party falls into an ambush prepared by a cunning and powerful savage named Possum, and Eric Jardine and his friend Maskey are captured and taken to the blacks' encampment, an enormous natural bowl in a well-concealed valley. Maskey is a pessimistic and hot-tempered fellow, but he is useful and courageous enough in real danger. Leading off from one side of their natural prison is a dark tunnel, but after a certain distance a narrow streak of light is seen far above, and Maskey intends that he and his friend shall attempt escape by climbing this crevasse during the night.

CHAPTER XVIII

A CORROBOREE

I THOUGHT Maskey was rather over-sure of our being able to escape in the manner he indicated. It was a horrible and fearsome crevasse in the daytime, but what would it be in the dark when one could not see to choose one's position?

"I fancy that when one starts to climb, Maskey, one will have to keep on going up," I said.

"I s'pose so."

"And supposing we get to a point, a hundred feet or so up, where we can get neither up nor down, what then? I don't want to die just yet."

"It's not a question of what we want—it's what we'll hev to do."

Maskey's fatalism annoyed me. He was such a contradictory sort of being. I had seen him when he thought he was bitten by a snake, anticipating the death agony; but still he would not hesitate to engage in the most foolhardy enterprises upon his own initiative. That was the explanation of the whole matter. So long as he was permitted to go exactly his own way he would stop at nothing, but the moment he thought someone was trying to influence him, he would cut off his nose to spite his face from sheer contrariness.

When I considered our position, there was not such a very great deal to grumble about. These savages seemed to have no definite plans as yet regarding us. They were creatures of caprice, and were liable to do anything at any time. The villainous Possum or the affronted actor might influence the others, and then, goodness only knew what might happen. What exercised me most was the grievous concern which our absence must occasion my uncle and the others.

"You ain't afraid, are you?" asked Maskey, suddenly.

I turned sharply to make after a fish, for, to tell the truth, the prospect of having to climb that awesome crevasse weighed upon me like a nightmare. I thought I could do most things when excited and with my blood up, but I do not mind confessing that climb in the dark scared me, and I did not want Maskey to know that it was so.

Twilight was coming on apace before we finished our fish-hunting. It struck me that the blacks took more fish from that native fishery than they really required. They seemed in high glee over the catch they had made. We all went back to the camp in the lower valley loaded up with the spoils.

It was evident that the blacks intended to make a night of it. While yet the fish was frizzling on the charcoal fires and in the stone and ant-bed ovens, they had begun to decorate and paint themselves for the great corroboree or dance that was to take place as soon as the moon showed over the cliff-tops. It was a weird scene that camp presented. There were fires everywhere, and already some of our late fishing companions, by means of skins, feathers, and pigments, were rendering themselves grotesque and fearsome objects.

"By gum, look there!" said Maskey to me as we sat eating. "Wouldn't you swear them fellers were skeletons in the dark?"

I certainly would have done so had I not known what was what. On the dark skins of the warriors Maskey pointed to the bony framework or skeleton picked out in what seemed luminous white clay or chalk; the dark flesh or skin blended with the gloomy background—they were practically animated skeletons. I never in my life saw anything half so realistic and uncanny. I would not have believed human beings could convert themselves into such ghastly freaks.

And then the monstrosities that began to show up from distant fires and mia-mias! There were creatures with the heads and tails of animals—creatures that were neither men nor brutes—demons from another and most horrible world.

Then later on, in a clear moonlit space with many fires burning in front of an orchestra of old men and women who crooned a weird species of chant, and who kept admirable time by clicking sticks and boomerangs together while some of them drummed on skins stretched across hoops, the weird corroboree began.

They were simply plays written and planned by their local poets, and meant to depict the scenes of interest and importance in their lives. Some of them were grim or absurd enough in all truth. Still they interested me, and I watched hour after hour as if spell-bound. Even Maskey seemed fascinated and influenced by the ghostly and well-acted scenes and the barbaric music. Gradually both performers and spectators grew more excited and noisier; no one seemed to heed us. The corroboree would work up to a grand climax, and then the whole affair would stop at an almost imperceptible sign as if by magic. It must have been close on midnight, and the Southern Cross showed over the cliff to the south.

We had gradually, and without attracting attention, moved to the edge of the outer circle of spectators. Everyone seemed so intent in watching the grotesque actors who were drawn up in front in the form of a semicircle, that I believe, for the time being, we were quite forgotten. One thing I realised was that both actors and audience were being wrought up to such a pitch of excitement that, if only a suggestion to indulge in some barbaric act was mooted to them, they would at once engage in it. I realised our position was a dangerous and critical one. We had one or two enemies in that savage mob, and suggestion was easy.

"Come on, Eric, but keep your eyes about you."

It was Maskey who spoke as he touched my arm. In the moonlight and firelight I could see his features working.

We backed cautiously into some bushes near at hand, then crawled on our hands and knees until we got to the banks of the creek.

"Jump in," commanded Maskey, "an' git to the other side."

I followed his example. How cold the water was!

We followed round the bend of the stream, keeping in the shadow as well as we could. The savages did not seem to have missed us. We approached the archway from which the stream issued.

Then Maskey put a hand on my arm, and pointing to a dark object ahead said, "Look!"

I looked, and I confess my heart was in my mouth. Maskey must have had eyes like a cat's, for at first I could hardly see the object he pointed at. It might have been a blackened tree-stump for all I could tell.

"Ssh!" said Maskey as I was about to speak. "It's someone bin sent to watch that passage, or else it's that beggar Possum doin' it on his own hook. Goodness help 'im if it is!"

We drew back into the shadow. Looking back from where we were we could see a flood of ruddy light with inky figures flecking it. A wild, somewhat mournful and by no means unmusical chant came from the native choir and orchestra at the camp. We could hear the shrill and wailing voices of their womankind, the gins, rising above and fretting the fuller and deeper voices of the men, the warriors. The tall white-limbed gums showed up spectral-like in the moonlight; they were the stately pillars of the forest-aisles, while high overhead,

like a jewelled dome capping the grey and mysterious cliffs, were the inscrutable heavens looking down serenely upon that significant scene which in this twentieth century showed what Man must have been like in the beginning.

"Eric," whispered Maskey again after a pause, during which the dark figure did not seem to have moved, "d'ye know I b'lieve it's that beggar Possum right enuff, but 'e's gone to sleep guarding the archway. He's leaning up against the rock."

"Let's get into the water again," I suggested. "We can pass him easily enough."

My companion grunted something that might have meant anything, but it was evident he thought we might try what I proposed.

Into the cold water again we dropped, and struggled up against the stream. I noticed that Maskey kept very close indeed to the bank, so that when he passed Possum he would be within a foot or so of him. The man of many vocations was in a very perilous position indeed. He leant against the rock on a species of little ledge not twelve inches from the stream, and if he were only to lose his balance and lurch forward, he would assuredly plunge right into it. But some people can fall asleep on horseback, and doubtless it was not the first time Possum had fallen asleep on his legs.

My heart was beating almost painfully now despite the chilling nature of the water, for if Possum were suddenly to awake he would have us at his mercy. There was more than one reason why he should wish our extinction. We were a perpetual menace to his safety. We belonged to the party that was taking back the rightful heir to the chieftainship of his people to headquarters, and that would mean the end of all his ambitious schemes.

The water seemed to have risen, and was well up to our waists. The moon was now right overhead, and what with the starlight it was almost as clear as in the daytime. We were close to Possum now, and his feet were within twenty-four inches of Maskey's head. I could see anger and loathing on the stockman's face as he glanced up at his slumbering enemy. And then Possum opened his eyes without the slightest warning, and stared full at us.

For a moment I believe he must have thought we were part and parcel of whatever he had been dreaming about. He stared at us without surprise, but still with a full recognition of our identities. And then an instantaneous look of horror or terror came into his face, and he grabbed the long spear that leant against the wall beside him.

My companion was too quick for him. Before he could use his spear, or give vent to that shout, the breath for which he was in the act of drawing, the stockman had shot out a horny, vice-like hand and grabbed him by an ankle. Next moment he was jerked off the ledge into the water.

"Here, Eric, grab t'other foot! If we keep the beggar head-down he'll not want to make a row."

I caught that other ankle, and helped to pull the villainous savage through the water under that archway. I knew it was as likely as not we would drown him, but our lives were in the balance, and, after all, the man we dragged was a monster and a murderer. Indeed, I was surprised that Maskey did not kill him.

"Steady, you beast!" cried Maskey as our capture began to kick vigorously. "If you come that game I'll fix you!"

Of course, Possum did not hear what Maskey said, but I have no doubt he understood what the shake that Maskey gave him portended.

In a minute or two we had passed under that archway, and stood under the crevasse on the other side. Looking up the narrow slit we could see it was filled with a wan, ghostly light. How were we ever going to negotiate such a climb?

We stepped on to a narrow platform, pulling the rascally savage with us. I had expected to find him at least unconscious, but he was nothing of the sort. I expressed my surprise to Maskey.

"What!" snorted Maskey. "Drown a chap like Possum!" and the melancholy stockman actually laughed.

"What are you going to do with him?" I asked. "He seems very much alive. You don't intend taking him up with us, do you?" The moment I had spoken I could have bitten off my tongue. I had suggested to Maskey the very thing that I did not want him to do, and which, of course, he would do.

"Why, of course!" he said. "D'ye suppose I'd leave the varmint behind?"

"Don't you think that he'll be a danger to us?" I pleaded. "Besides, the chances are he'll be the best climber, and he might get up to some monkey tricks before we reached the top—if it's possible to reach it at all."

"I'll chance it," was the somewhat enigmatical reply. Surely than Maskey there was no crankier and madder man in the whole continent of Australia.

Possum coughed a little, and looked a trifle sick, but that was all. Evidently a black man took more drowning than a white one. When he did look at us, I confess the malignity of his gaze frightened me. There was a world of hatred and murder in it. Still it was quite evident he knew that in Maskey he had met his match.

The stockman took the savage by a snaky lock of hair and pointed to a little ledge that ran upwards to where the crevasse almost came

together. Then by signs he intimated what he wanted done. He also by certain other eloquent signs intimated that if there were the slightest hitch in the proceedings, swift and certain death would be the consequence. Possum seemed to understand.

Maskey made Possum go in the lead. We reached the narrow slit, and I saw the savage place his back against one wall of rock with his hands palm backwards behind him. He then placed his feet against the opposite wall. The idea was obvious; we were to raise ourselves in this fashion until we reached the top! And what if the crevasse widened? It was surely one of the maddest and most foolish schemes ever the mind of man conceived.

What was to prevent the savage when he reached the top—and of course he would reach it first—from kicking downwards and precipitating Maskey and myself into the horrible depths?

I determined I was not going to get underneath the pair. Such an attempt at escape seemed the height of foolishness in any case. I chose a position a little to the right of the two.

"Now, up you get," said Maskey to Possum.

I could see plainly that Possum could hardly conceal his satisfaction at the course about to be pursued. That monkey-like savage at once began to climb, and I could see the prospect did not seem to scare him in the very least.

The strain of my terrible position was becoming something beyond human endurance; in another moment I should be dropping to a fearful death. Then Maskey grabbed me by the clothing.

"Rest if you should get tired, Eric," said the stockman, "and don't never look down."

I must say Maskey's climbing powers surprised me. His long and muscular legs and arms gave him a great advantage. He seemed even a better climber than Possum, who must have spent a good deal of his time at the game. I had always prided myself upon my climbing capabilities, but I was literally nowhere with these two. By taking short steps I found the strain was not quite so great. But the position was an extremely trying and difficult one.

Within a few minutes we must have mounted to a height of some forty or fifty feet. That fissure was of wonderfully uniform width.

And then something occurred that put the fear of death into my heart.

CHAPTER XIX

A SICKENING TIME

I HAVE said that while I was climbing up that crevasse I kept a few paces apart from the others. I had now reason to regret it. To my horror I found that the walls of rock against which I braced myself were drawing apart from each other, and the strain of the great stretch was telling upon my strength. Oh, how my back and arms ached!

"Maskey," I exclaimed, "I'm afraid this is becoming too much for me."

My companion looked sideways and downwards. At a glance he realised my position.

"You must try and lower yourself again," he cried. "Keep as close to the end of the track as you can get."

Lower myself! It was difficult enough to climb in such a fashion, but to lower oneself! Of all the nightmarish situations I had experienced in my life, that was assuredly the worst.

The air in that sunless, damp crevasse must have resembled that of an ice-house, but what with every nerve and muscle in my body on the rack, straining in that unnatural position, the perspiration fairly streamed from me. My position was one of the most exquisite torture. I began to lower myself again, but the strain was something beyond human endurance. I felt my limbs becoming numb. In another minute I must lose all control over them, and drop to the death beneath. And what a horrible death!

Maskey must have divined the situation, for he cried:—

"Hold hard there, Eric. I'll be with you in two shakes."

He resembled a huge spider as he turned and came with a hand over hand sidelong movement. That middle-aged stockman must have possessed nerves and sinews of steel.

In another minute he had grabbed me by the clothing. "Now lower away," he cried.

I did so, and two minutes later I was in a spot where the crevasse was so narrow that I could rest easily by sticking my elbows and legs out on either side. Maskey must have borne the greater part of my weight.

"Now rest a minute," he commanded, "and then keep as close to the end as you can get. Goodness! Where's that beggar Possum?"

The wily savage had seized his opportunity, and was making an upward dash for it.

"Hold on, you beggar!" cried Maskey. "If you don't, I'll roast you!"

I could hardly have credited what followed had I not been an actual witness. I made certain that with such a start there could not possibly be any catching up the black man, even though Maskey's powers of transforming himself into a species of human spider had astonished me.

The way in which Maskey made after Possum put me in mind of a huge land crab scutting up a steep slope.

Impelled by a morbid sort of curiosity I climbed as quickly as I could in order to see what happened. I saw Possum, who must have thought he was now fairly safe, pause to wrench a piece of loose rock from the cliffs, with a purpose that was unmistakable. He had all but succeeded in securing it, when, impelled, I suppose, by curiosity, he glanced over his shoulder in order to see how much he was ahead of the enemy.

When he discovered that Maskey was right alongside him I thought the savage would have dropped from his precarious perch in sheer fright.

"You silly idiot!" cried Maskey, and the next moment he was boxing Possum's ears.

I thought it was a queer sort of punishment to mete out to a would-be murderer, but I afterwards came to the conclusion that Maskey did not want to incapacitate or dash him to the bottom of the crevasse. For some purpose best known to himself he wanted to fetch Possum along with him.

Then up once more, and I sincerely hope I may never again have to tackle such another feat. How I kept my footing I can hardly tell now. Only that the rock was mostly conglomerate, or what is familiarly known as plum-pudding rock, I am sure I could not have accomplished that climb. There certainly were places where moss or lichens gave security against slipping, but there were also glassy damp surfaces that caused one's feet to slide about in a sickening and appalling manner. If I had been granted more time to think about that climb, I am sure I would have taken off my boots. As for Maskey, I don't suppose anything would have made any difference.

"Come on, Eric," he cried—"only another hundred feet or so to the top. I can smell fresh air already."

"*Another hundred feet or so!*" I had been climbing, climbing automatically, and had almost begun to believe that it was all some terrible nightmare, and that there was no top to reach.

Another hundred feet! How could I possibly do it?

Then cramp seized upon my limbs, and I thought the end had come. Surely to let myself drop and finish the whole ghastly business would be the best thing that could happen. But it would be horrible to have one's body rasped and battered about between these cruel and jagged walls of rock. By an effort that surprises me still I clenched my teeth and kept on upwards.

"Hello there, Eric!" cried Maskey. "Here's the top at last, boy! We've all but done it."

And, surely enough, it was as if a world of hope and help rose up before my despairing eyes. I saw a rift overhead and great gleaming stars in the blue of heaven.

But our peril was not at an end. Possum lacked neither courage nor resource. He was a desperate man, and he did not know what we intended to do with him when we reached the top. His own evil nature probably suggested that we intended to mete out some horrible fate to him, and that once on the plateau above he would be utterly at our mercy. He realised the necessity of immediate and decisive action.

He was some little distance ahead of Maskey, and now he put on an extraordinary spurt. He more resembled some gigantic ape than a man as he scaled the remaining thirty feet or so that was between us and the brink. He was so quick that he had covered half the distance before Maskey had divined his desperate intention. And then the stockman made after him.

Possum gained the brink first. He threw himself backwards out of sight. Next moment, to my horror, I saw him reappear, and tower over us with a great stone in his hands. We could see a grin upon his face as the moonlight shone full upon it. He had turned the tables upon us with a vengeance.

For a moment he seemed to be uncertain as to which of the two dark objects in that crevasse was Maskey and which was me. Maskey, of course, was nearest to him. Doubtless to put him off his aim the stockman uttered a hoarse cry that made me think of the yell of some wild animal, and it was a fortunate thing for us both he did so.

CHAPTER XX

WE ESCAPE

IT must have been that indescribable blood-curdling shout Maskey gave which interfered with the correct aim of the black man, or it may have been the moonlight, which, as everyone knows, is very deceptive. Whichever way it was, the fact remains that the rock which Possum threw hit the side of the cliff about a foot to the right of Maskey's head, and actually broke into pieces, some of which bruised the stockman severely.

I had not stopped in my climb upwards, and was now within a foot or two of the brink. Possum either did not think I was worth his notice, or else he was too anxious to kill Maskey, for he turned to grab another stone.

That gave me my opportunity. I reached the edge of the cliff, and rolled on to the level. I was on my feet again that same instant. The savage had just stooped, but I was too quick for him. I hurled myself upon him.

When I think about it now, it was a rash thing of me to do. I should have picked up another stone and attacked him with that. But there was hardly time to do this, far less act. I grabbed his broad, thick-set neck with both hands as he was in the act of rising with the stone in his. With a snarl like that of some wild animal he straightened himself. He did not drop the stone. I must have been the merest feather-weight to that brawny savage.

"Let go of him—let go!" and I realised that Maskey had already reached the top.

But I was too late. The athletic and tricky savage with a quick jerk of his broad back threw me over his right shoulder, and grabbed me by the chest. He dashed me to the ground so as to get a better grip of me, and the same instant I managed to pick up a stone as large as a cricket ball. As he hurled me at the crevasse I managed to let him have that stone right between the eyes. He gave a gasp and a half stifled cry that reminded me of some wild animal which has received a deadly wound. My action probably saved me, for I stopped just short of that gruesome brink.

Maskey made a rush in upon Possum, but the latter must at one time have learned some white men's tricks, for he shot out a muscular leg and sent the horse-driver sprawling.

When we looked round for Possum again he was gone. He had disappeared from that open space as if he had vanished into thin air. We ran to the edge of the crevasse, and looked down, but of course we could see nothing in those gloomy depths We caught up two or three large stones and sent them crashing down. The unearthly din they made as they rebounded from side to side terrified me. The effect was that of a series of thunder-claps, and I made sure that the blacks in the lower valley would hear and make after us. They would probably be aware of this means of reaching the high ground.

"He's gone, Eric," exclaimed Maskey in a mystified way, "an' I can't for the life of me make out how he's managed it. But he must

have gone back down that hole again an' be hidin' under some ledge, you can lay to it."

"There's no doubting the fact that he has disappeared," I said. "I vote we go, too."

"Crikey, but I saw you give 'im somethin' to carry away with him!" and Maskey grinned. "As you say, it's no good fossicking 'round here any longer. We'll let out."

"Let's have a peep into the lower valley first," I suggested. "The edge of the cliff can't be more than sixty yards from here. I'm curious to see what it looks like with nothing to break the view."

We walked about a hundred yards or so in a westerly direction, then all at once we stood on the edge of the great cliff that had so lately constituted the walls of our prison, and which we had looked up at so despairingly and longingly. The sight of that great gorge opening up so suddenly before us like a vast bottomless pit, or the crater of a volcano, struck something akin to terror into our hearts. It was as if the world had suddenly fallen away from under our feet.

The bottom of the gorge or valley must have lain several hundred feet beneath us, and the thin blue mist or haze that veiled the great trees and other objects doubtless added to its seeming depth and profundity. As my eyes pierced the grey I noticed several points of light. They were the blacks' fires—the camp which we had left what seemed to us such a long time ago.

"Listen!" exclaimed Maskey. "Them fellers are keepin' it up yet."

And surely enough there rose up on that still air the weird and barbaric music of the corroboree. We could hear quite distinctly the now rapid and frenzied clicking and drumming of the various barbaric intruments and weapons with which they beat time. Then all of a sudden, with an abruptness that was startling, all sound ceased, and we knew that the corroboree was at an end.

"Now," said my companion, with something approaching hilarity, "the fat's in the fire, and them jokers'll miss us."

I wanted to be off at once. I did not relish the idea of all those grim and fearsome dancers being on our trail, even although they were so far away.

But Maskey seemed to enjoy the situation. "Ssh!" he said, with his head on one side. "Just listen for a minute."

I listened. There was a dead silence. Then all at once we could hear an exciting jabbering. The savages had missed us. The fat was in the fire with a vengeance. We could hear a series of cooees and calls as the blacks dispersed to search for us. Bright points of light broke out. It was the blacks lighting torches or fire-sticks, as they call them, for the Australian aboriginal does not care to move about in the gloom without a light for fear of evil spirits.

"Come away, Maskey," I cried. "They're sure to find out how we've gone even if Possum doesn't tell them. We'll want all the start we've got."

"Right-o!" responded Maskey. "Goodness knows, though, where this perch is going to take us to! 'Pears to me as if we were standing on the roof of the world."

It was a good comparison. A long, grey, ghastly shelf stretched out in front of us. Over our heads and on either side was the great dome of the heavens jewelled with gleaming worlds.

My companion took a rapid survey of the stars. Many a time by their aid had he steered through the trackless forest.

"Come on, boy," he said. "I don't know that we'll be able to go exactly as we'd like to. It's a case of going much as this tableland takes us. I hope we'll be able to get down to earth again when we want to."

I confess Maskey's remarks startled me. It had not struck me that we might have ascended to a land where it would be impossible to descend to the plain again. Now I came to think of it, I had heard of explorers who had followed those precipitous elevations round for days, and had not been able to ascend to the heights above.

CHAPTER XXI

TOUCH AND GO

I FOUND that to keep pace with Maskey's long strides it was occasionally necessary to break into a trot. It was very cold on that elevated plateau, so the enforced exertion was good for me. For an hour or more we kept on, and I noted that the plateau narrowed considerably. At last its breadth dwindled to such a disconcerting degree that it resembled a mere plank extended into space.

"Maskey," I cried, "this is too much like tight-rope walking for me. I'm afraid we've reached the end of the world."

I tried to speak lightly, but the sickening space all around me made me feel queer. Moreover, the ledge began to dip in an alarming fashion, suggesting a subsidence of that end of the ridge. I could now see the great forest country dimly far below.

"Look to your feet, Eric," observed Maskey. "There's a landslip here. I can see it open out farther on. It'll be light in two twos. Steady, now!"

I confess if that eccentric stockman had not

gone in front and encouraged me by his example I would not have attempted that awful path. Moreover, dawn was coming on apace, and a splash of tawny yellow had usurped the place of a watery grey in the eastern sky

"Steady, there, Eric," said Maskey, suddenly. "Look out for them loose stones, but don't get thinkin' you can't manage it. I could hop over it with one leg tied up."

This was too much for me. I was not going to be beaten by an elderly stock-rider. Holding my breath and fixing my eyes on that perilously narrow parapet, I began the most perilous feat I had ever attempted. My climb of an hour or two earlier was child's play compared to it. It was only by banishing the thought of what a slip might mean, and by moving quickly forward, that I kept my balance. Had I paused for a moment, been seized by a spasm of fear, or taken my eyes off that razor-like ledge, it would have been all up with me. A loose stone or the slightest breath of air would have been sufficient to upset my equilibrium. As it was, I crossed almost like one who walks in his sleep, and when Maskey gripped me by the arm on the other side, I sank to the ground, where I lay for a minute or two breathing hard as if just awakened from a particularly bad form of nightmare.

"Now then," said Maskey, "after that you needn't be skeered to tackle what's in front of us. It looks a trifle rough, but I reckon it'll be excitin' an' rippin' good fun if you can just bring yerself to see it."

I had misgivings as to what my enthusiastic friend might mean by "good fun," and sat up so as to more fully realise the situation.

We had reached the extreme end of the plateau, and were on a little broken knob of ground no bigger than a suburban back garden. But I noted that the plateau had been gradually dipping and become more broken, so that now I was not particularly surprised to see that a great part of it had fallen away altogether, with the result that, some sixty feet or so from the edge, there was a long chute of *debris* which was little better than coarse sand. It fell right away at a sickening angle for four hundred feet or more, while its base was hidden by the tree-tops of the great forest. It was such a sheer and unbroken descent that I did not for the moment associate it with Maskey's idea of sport. But that gentleman did not allow me to be under any misapprehension as to the matter.

"We can climb down all right to that ole slide," he observed. "Then, if we can find a couple of flat stones, we'll get along famously."

"We've got to get down to it first," I remarked. "And even if we do succeed in making a start, how are we going to apply the brakes?"

"We'll get down to it, no fear. But first let's have a look round. The camp we left t'other day is in that direction, I reckon"—he pointed to what I took to be due north—"but they'd foller round this here mountain in order to look for us. They'd suspicion that if we were took by the blacks it 'ud be the hills they'd make for, and these are the only ones jest hereabouts. When we get to the foot we'll be pretty certain to pick up their tracks."

While Maskey spoke I had been looking all around. It was fortunate for us I did so. Some two hundred yards or so in the rear of us, and just where the ridge began to dip, were some half-dozen blacks. They carried spears and other weapons in their hands.

"Maskey," I exclaimed, in dismay, "they have cornered us!"

The stockman grinned amusedly. The situation seemed in no way to alarm him.

"Nonsense!" he said. "I'd be sorry to let fellers like them best us. Just you peep over the edge, and pick out a good place to get down while I warns them off."

As I turned to obey I observed my companion pick up one or two stones about the size of cricket balls, and with a skill of which I had not suspected him, launch them at the savages. Maskey was surely one of the best stone-throwers I ever met in my life. It must have been a matter of long practice with him. *Biff! Biff!*—and the black fellow in the lead went down like a nine-pin. The second unfortunate clasped his head with both hands, and spun round and round on one heel like a top getting under weigh. He doubtless felt he had to do something.

"That'll give them something to think about in the meantime," observed Maskey. "Now, over you get, and I'll foller later."

I clambered down the somewhat soft rock, and reached the top of the fearsome chute of coarse sand and *debris*. How we were to get to the bottom safely was a puzzle of the first magnitude. If one was to start sliding or rolling down it seemed that nothing on earth could avert certain destruction. I clung to the side of the cliff, fearful to trust myself to it. Would Maskey never come? The sooner it was all over the better.

"Now then, Eric, look for a flat stone."

Maskey had the words out of his mouth while he was still some twenty feet or so above my head. He lowered himself to the spot where I stood in much less time than it takes to write it.

"The niggers are gathering in force," he cried. "They made it a little too hot for me with their spear and stone-throwing. They'll be on the top of us directly. Sit down on this,

and dig your heels into the sand in front. Don't lose control of your brakes, mind!"

He indicated a flat stone about eighteen inches in diameter, and forced me on to it. My legs were stretched out in front as in a toboggan. I divined his idea instantly.

"Now off you go, and I'll follow," he exclaimed and gave me a shove.

CHAPTER XXIII

BROUGHT TO BAY

I DO not know how on earth I managed to keep my balance on that gigantic sand-slide. The reason probably was that I had no time to think and be afraid. As the earth rushed past me I gasped for breath. I dared not dig my heels into the ground, instinctively realising that, should they meet with any obstacle, I would be sent spinning into the air, and probably killed. But the pace was not maintained. The sandy soil became looser and softer. In another minute or two my improvised toboggan stopped altogether on the very edge of a terrace, beneath which stretched a longer and even more rapid course. I had only saved myself on my first lap by leaning well back, gripping the stone underneath me with both hands, and keeping my legs well up in the air.

Hearing a series of wild shouts behind me, and looking back, I beheld a curious sight.

Maskey was careering down at express-train speed as I had done, but with this difference: his stone had started to gyrate, and the stock-man, of course, began to spin round with it. As his stone must have been twice the size of mine, he lay on his back with legs and arms in air.

The most alarming feature of the situation, however, was that two or three goodly sized boulders were rushing down with him. At first I thought we must have dislodged them in our headlong career, but the true state of affairs became speedily apparent. The blacks were now rolling rocks down so as to effectually squash us. It would not take much of a stone rolled from such a height to do that. It was madness to remain where I was. But what about Maskey?

The question was disposed of almost as soon as it presented itself. If I remained there he would cannon right into me. There was no time to get out of his way. I must go down that awful chute. I scraped myself clear of the little terrace, braced up my courage, and committed myself to the descent again.

I did not do so a moment too soon. Maskey struck the ridge, passed right over it, and cannoned into me. It was lucky for both of us that the ridge had considerably diminished his momentum, otherwise the result would have been disastrous in the extreme.

With a roar and a crash as of thunder, and leaving a trail of dust in its wake, a huge boulder rushed down the slope past us. It only missed Maskey by a few feet. Then a miniature avalanche of smaller rocks descended. Had it not been for the stone on which I was seated my back would certainly have been broken. Only that we were travelling in the same direction the impact would have proved disastrous. Some of the stones were coming down in a series of flying leaps, and it was by no means unlikely that we would have our skulls cracked long before we got to the bottom. We were in a pretty pickle.

Naturally the end came quickly. The great wooded plain seemed to have rushed up and met us. The odd feature of the situation was that somehow we could not see the bottom of the slope. It seemed to merge in an odd fashion with the greenery of the trees. Suddenly Maskey, who had kept close to me for the greater part of the descent, appeared to be considerably exercised. He made frantic efforts to arrest his further progress.

"Pull up, Eric!" he yelled. "We'll be over the precipice in another minute!"

We were both of us too late. We dug our heels into the yielding ground with all the abandon of despair, but it was as if we were going over a water-chute. Maskey was now abreast of me, and I saw him throw himself clear of his stone. He yelled to me to follow suit. I did so, but it did not mend matters. As we were shot into space I caught the gleam of water underneath.

Although it could not have been more than a fall of twenty feet or so into that pool, we shot into it with a violence that, for a minute or two, knocked the breath clean out of our bodies. The water closed over my head, and I felt myself going down, down. I had swallowed more liquid than was good for me, but the chill of it stimulated me to consciousness again.

In two minutes more we were scrambling out of that long pool, which was simply a bend of the splendid creek that skirted the base of the cliff.

"Look!" cried Maskey. "Can't you see them coming down as we came?" Some of the blacks were emulating our example, and sliding down the great chute on flat stones. "Our only chance is to tackle them when we've got 'em in the water. If they overtake us in the bush they'll have us at their mercy."

The savages came crashing down into the pool, and as soon as they reappeared on the surface Maskey and Eric let them have it for all they were worth.

CHAPTER XXIII

HARD PRESSED

I REALISED that what Maskey proposed was after all our only chance. If we started off in any direction the blacks would undoubtedly track and surround us. If we stood on the brink of that deep pool we should be able to keep them there by means of a little judicious stone-throwing. I realised, however, that in the end they must get the better of us.

"Maskey," I said. "Did you hear that?"

My comrade had heard it, too—a distant report resembling that of a fowling-piece, and a double echo following close upon it.

"That's your uncle," cried Maskey, visibly excited. "It's my impression he's follering this 'ere creek round. Let's give him a cooee."

Despite the water we had swallowed a few minutes before, we raised our voices and created a fairly respectable volume of sound. Indeed, as we faced almost due north, we realised that our voices would stand a very good chance of travelling almost to where the shot had been fired, more particularly as the sound-waves would, in all likelihood, follow along the cliff.

We made back to the pool, and caught up some likely stones about the size of cricket balls. We had a very good idea that our friends would skirt the base of the plateau, and that if we could only hold out till they came up we would be saved.

I saw Maskey produce a small glass bottle from some part of his dress, withdraw the cork, take out a match, and approach a group of tall, dry pandanus palms. In another minute he had set fire to those highly inflammable trees, and a great column of flame and smoke shot up instantly into the heavens.

"That'll hurry them up!" observed Maskey. "Hello, here come the niggers in great shape! Half a dozen of 'em. Let 'em have it, Eric, as they strike the water. Now then!"

To see those blacks take that enforced plunge as we had done was exciting, to say the least of it. Some of them tried hard to prevent themselves going over, but only one of them succeeded. He afterwards sat perched on the brink, evidently afraid to move, lest he would go over also, looking a very sick and unhappy individual indeed. There seemed nothing for him to do but to take that plunge, and he was doubtless sorry he had not taken it.

I could not resist taking a flying shot at the niggers as they passed through the air. I missed the flying bodies, and afterwards was glad I had done so. It seemed an unfair advantage, and unsportsmanlike.

It was different, however, when the savages were once in the water. If we did not succeed in keeping them there, they would very soon make us feel sorry we had not done so. The moment the two first came to the surface Maskey and I let them have it for all we were worth. But a black fellow in the water is as wary and quick as any wild duck. No sooner had a stone left our hands than that dark mop of hair, framing a dusky face and gleaming eyes, was down again in an instant. Our missiles were invariably too late for their intended marks.

"Them beggars can swim underneath water like ducks," said Maskey. "Look out, Eric, they'll crop up where you least expect 'em."

It was as he said, for as I watched the spot near the middle of the pool where a black head had disappeared something distracted my attention to a shelf of rock on my extreme right. I turned in that direction just in time to see a black stealthily raise himself out of the water. He was supporting himself by his hands, and next moment he would be on *terra firma*.

He had one knee on the rock as I flung that round stone with all the strength that was in me straight at his head. He was a most villainous-looking savage, with an evil grin on his squat face. The stone caught him somewhere behind the right ear, and the fellow dropped back as if shot. A savage has an abnormally thick skull, so I suppose the blow only stunned him.

But I had no time to watch the effect of my shot, and see whether the black would rise again or not. The ledge of the rock on our side the pool was barely a foot above the surface and, looking along the edge of it, I saw a couple of hands shoot up and grasp it.

I am afraid I did not use my hands to loosen his grip. The owner raised his head out of the water to give vent to his outraged feelings. I felt that he was out of the running.

While I was thus engaged my comrade had been having his work cut out for him. He had been running from one part of the pool to the other, tackling the blacks as they emerged from the water. Having the advantage of the situation he had generally managed to pounce upon the attacker just as the latter was occupied in raising himself on to the ledge. When Maskey bundled him unceremoniously back into the pool again it goes without saying that the attacker was effectually disposed of.

It was, however, impossible that we could prevent all the savages landing. Within five minutes several had managed to land both up stream and down, and were proceeding to arm themselves with stones, and advance on us. Had they wanted to kill us it is my opinion they could easily have done so at this stage.

It is more than likely they wanted to take us alive, so as to repay us with interest for the trouble we had caused them.

"Make back to them rocks, Eric!" yelled Maskey, as he picked up a stone and hurled it at the head of a savage. "We'll get our backs to them. Look, there's more of them niggers coming down that chute! If your uncle doesn't come jolly sharp we're booked for Timbuctoo, and make no mistake about it."

The tables were being turned on us with a vengeance, and as usual under the truly desperate circumstances my comrade was showing what was surely untimely levity. As he made for the rocks in question he shouted jocular and derisive remarks to his attackers, at the same time picking up and throwing stones at their heads with an effectiveness that considerably astonished the blacks, and restrained their ardour.

But our attackers were ten to one, and at last we stood with our backs to the rock, and a semicircle of menacing savages closing in upon us.

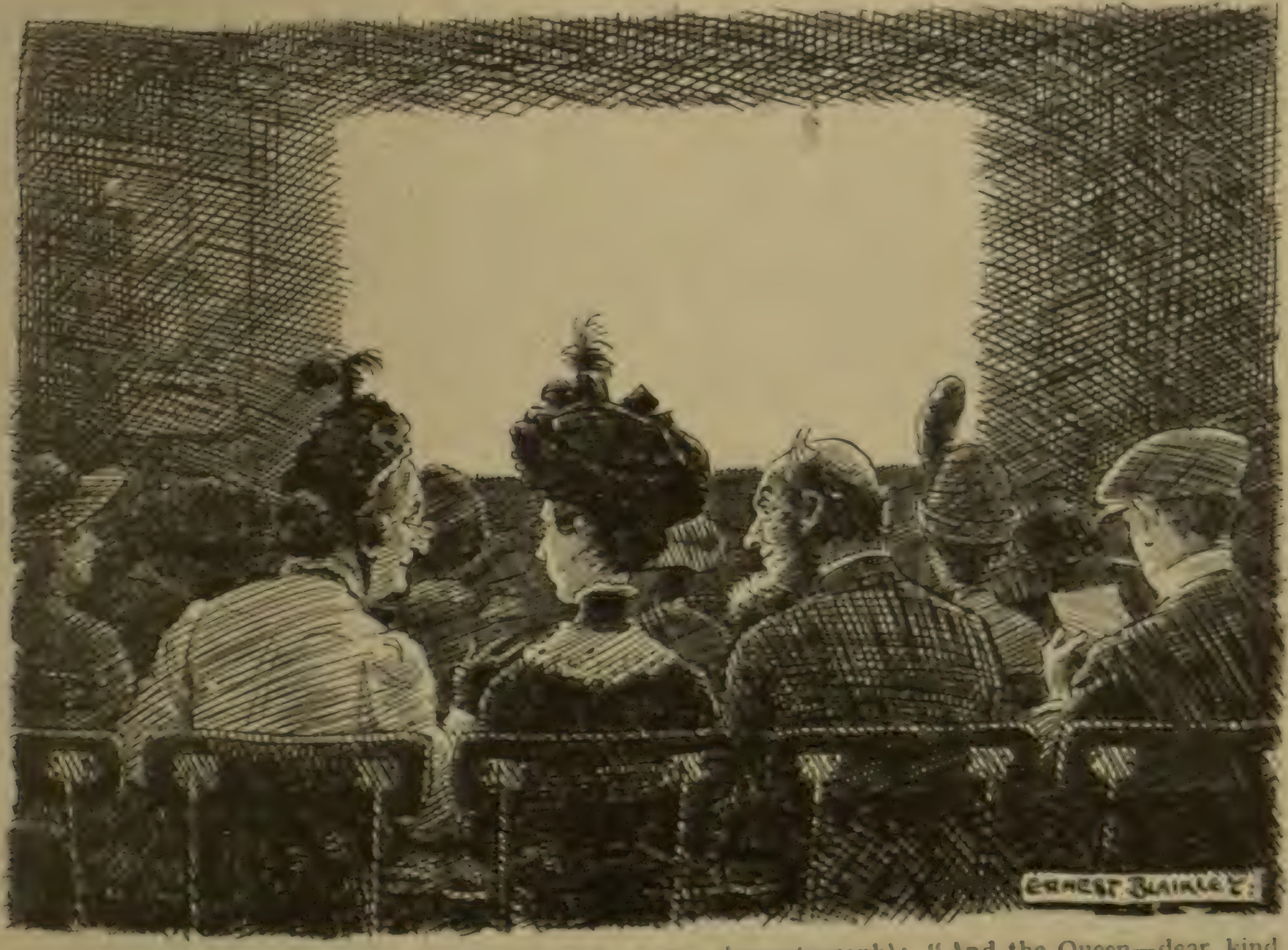
Maskey dodged their missiles in a way that, under less serious conditions, would have commanded my admiration. Still, it struck me the blacks were anxious to take us alive. They skipped about in a manner that spoke of previous practice. And all the time they closed in upon us. In another minute or so it was obvious they would rush us, and that would be the beginning of the end.

Suddenly a couple of shots rang out somewhere on our right, and Maskey gave a hoarse hurrah. The blacks stopped short on their onward rush, turned, and made back for the pool. Next moment they were taking headers into it. A couple of horsemen dashed up, firing at the disappearing savages as they rode.

It was my uncle and Hume, who had come to our rescue just in the nick of time.

(Another splendid instalment of this exciting serial next month.)

A SPECIAL FAVOUR.



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For full particulars see "The Captain Club" pages.

Each of these Pictures represents a well-known Football Team.

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GUY'S

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Again the plaintive whine from the shadows of the spruce, and this time the boy retraced his steps and stepped over the little captive. What did it matter that his hands were torn and bleeding ere he had loosened the binding chains?—for that night Teddy fell asleep realising, for the first time, something of the pleasure of a great and single-handed achievement.

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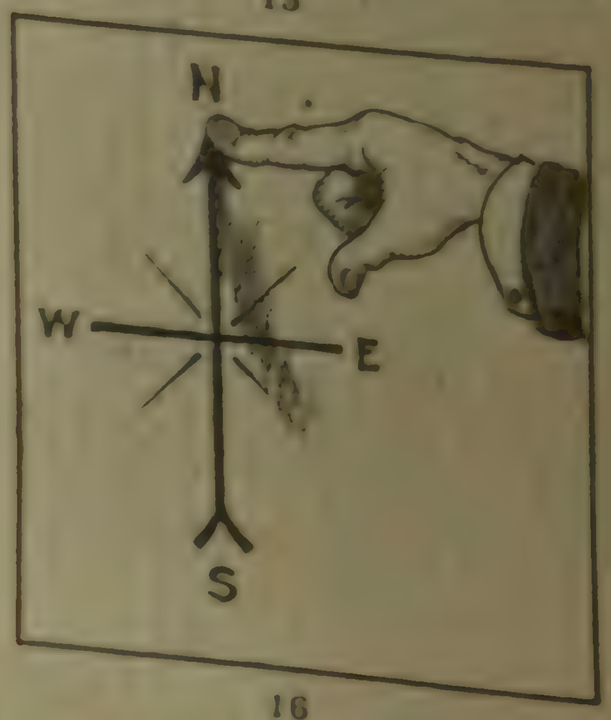

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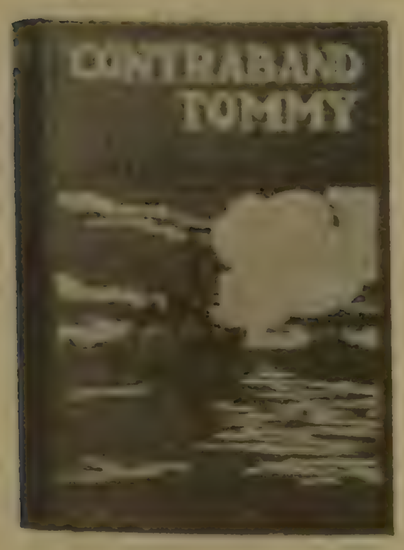
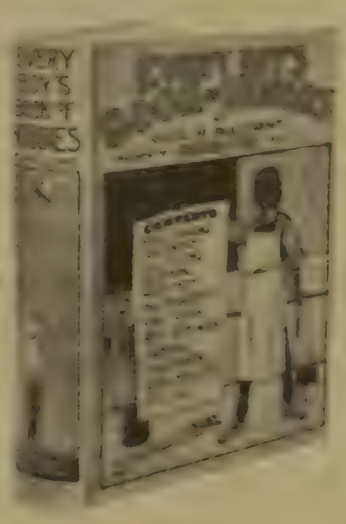
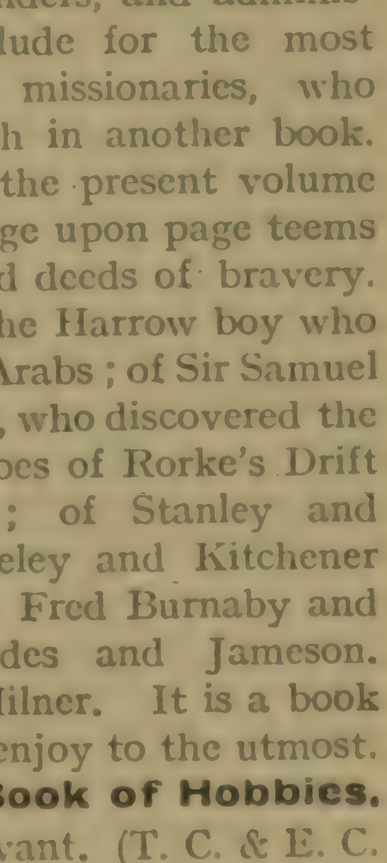
BOOKS for CHRISTMAS READING

Contraband Tommy. By Captain Charles Gleig. (T. C. & E. C. Jack, 3*s.* 6*d.*)—A haughty midshipman and a humble ship's boy, both on the way to join the same ship, are led by their respective destinies to the same inn in the same quiet village, and even to share the same bedroom. The ship's boy, already likely to get into hot water for exceeding his leave, is overcome by the desire to be a middy himself for a season, and in the night he exchanges uniforms with the sleeping young officer and departs. A long train of adventures follows, both for the sham and the real middy. A combination of cuteness and luck carry Tommy Larkspur through, though he has a warmer time than he bargained for, and a variety of circumstances hinder the unwilling party to the deception from presenting a good case and coming into his own. An expedition against West African blacks proves fortunate for Tommy, since it gives him an opening for some gallant conduct which brings his prank to a pleasanter conclusion than he had any right or reason to expect. It also gives the author a chance to write some splendid fighting chapters. This tale, by the way, has won the £200 prize offered by Messrs. T. C. & E. C. Jack for the best boys' story submitted to them this year. It shows to good advantage Captain Gleig's first-hand knowledge of modern sea life. Captain Gleig, of course, is well known to readers of THE CAPTAIN, many of whom will recall "The Middy of the *Blunderbore*," one of his earliest works, with the keenest pleasure. We congratulate Captain Gleig on the success attending his last story.





Heroes of Modern Africa. By Edward Gilliat, M.A. (Seeley, Service & Co., Ltd., London, 5*s.*) — This is one of the "Heroes of the World Series," which has already proved so popular. As the author reminds us, the list of British heroes who have given their life-work, and in many cases their lives, to the exploration and development of Africa, is a long one. The present volume contains the stories of some explorers, naval and military commanders, and administrators, but does not include for the most part philanthropists and missionaries, who will probably be dealt with in another book. It is difficult to lay aside the present volume when once commenced. Page upon page teems with exciting adventure and deeds of bravery. We read of James Bruce, the Harrow boy who feared nothing among wild Arabs; of Sir Samuel Baker and his devoted wife, who discovered the Albert Nyanza; of the heroes of Rorke's Drift and Isandhlwana; of Stanley and Livingstone, Wolseley and Kitchener and Roberts; Col. Fred Burnaby and Gordon; of Rhodes and Jameson. and Cromer and Milner. It is a book to gloat over and enjoy to the utmost.



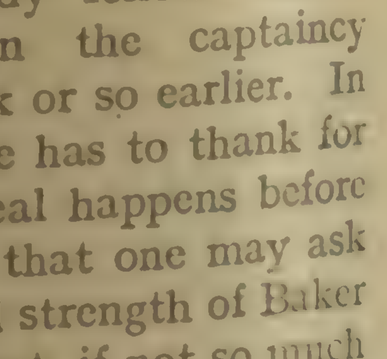
Every Boy's Book of Hobbies. By Cecil H. Bullivant. (T. C. & E. C. Jack, 5*s.*)—This ranks as one of the most practical and comprehensive books of hobbies that we have ever

seen. The same author wrote "Home Fun," which we reviewed in these pages last season, and which proved one of the successes of the year. The great merit of Mr. Bullivant's book is its comprehensiveness and its simplicity. We can think of no hobby appealing to boys that is not dealt with in this bright, fat volume. Its five hundred odd pages are excellently illustrated with nearly a thousand diagrams, the text is clear and well printed, and altogether it is a splendid production. It contains most useful hints on how to make things in a home workshop, many articles on indoor hobbies, others on collecting, outdoor pastimes, and the keeping of pets. Fretwork, coin and stamp collecting, simple surveying, caravanning, bee-keeping, black and white drawing, wood-carving, photography, autograph-hunting—all these and many more are dealt with thoroughly in perfectly understandable chapters, and the boy who receives this book as a Christmas present will indeed consider himself fortunate.

Hidden in Canadian Wilds. By John Mackie. (J. Nisbet & Co., 5s.)—Captainites who are reading with interest "The Lost Explorer" will be glad to know that Mr. Mackie this Christmas has had no less than four books published, each one of them a real good tale, and calculated to grip the reader's interest from start to finish. "Hidden in Canadian Wilds" is a fine tale of adventure, in which the excitement never flags. Messrs. Nisbet have produced it in a very handsome binding, and there is an excellent coloured frontispiece by Mr. Arthur Twidle.

The great charm of Mr. Mackie's work is that he writes from actual experience, and whether he is telling a story of Australia, or Canada, or Africa, you know that the facts he gives you are accurate, and the deeds he tells of possible. "Had I drawn from my own imagination only I could not have produced anything half so interesting," he says in his preface to "Black Man's Rock." (Nisbet, 2s. 6d.) This is a story of the Basuto War (1879 to 1881), and tells of the perils of two English boys concerned in the rising of the Basutos. "In Search of Smith" (Grant Richards, 3s. 6d. net), and "The Treasure Hunters" (Jarrold, 2s. 6d.) are the two other stories from his pen recently issued, the first of which will be remembered as one of the most popular CAPTAIN serials.

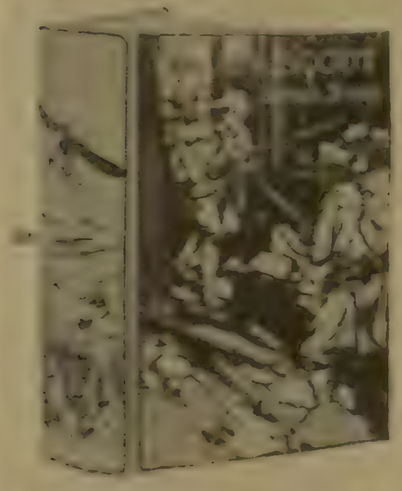
The Captain's Chum. By Ross Harvey. (T. Fisher Unwin, 5s.)—Though in the main this story runs on rather familiar lines, there is freshness and excellence enough to make it thoroughly appreciated. An honoured senior, popular with all the school, gets into a fix through gambling, and is likely to be disgraced. And disgraced he is, in a measure, for he has to bear a more material discomfiture than the mere torturings of conscience. This is largely due to the strong action of his study-fellow Baker, who forces him to resign the captaincy conferred on him but a week or so earlier. In the end it is Baker whom he has to thank for his salvation, but a good deal happens before this is evident. A question that one may ask himself is whether the rugged strength of Baker would not win as much respect, if not so much popularity, as his brilliant and attractive, but weak, friend Raymond. One may also be led to ask again whether the strong man or the popular makes the better captain. Both wear the captain's cap in the course of this story, and the brilliant man's personality wins all the way with the boys—with a striking exception or two. But the strong man's brief reign, full of action as it is, is good for the school and good for Raymond. The story grips the reader, as any book will that has a strong man in it. And there is more than one strong man at St. Helens.



Chats on Postage Stamps. By Fred. J. Melville. (T. Fisher Unwin, 5s. net.)—This is a book that should be on the shelf of every stamp collector's library, to be taken down and referred to again and again. It is the most complete manual on the stamps of the world that can possibly be imagined, and it is written in such a free and easy style that the veriest tyro can understand it. Some of the chapter headings will give you an idea of the

ground this book covers; first there is the explanation of "Philatelic Terms," then the story of the post from its earliest days is told; following this we get advice "On Forming a Collection," "On Limiting a Collection," on "Forgeries, Fakes, and Fancies," and a description of some of the most famous collections ever amassed. If you are a stamp collector you should get this volume for yourself; if your chum is a stamp collector it would make a splendid Christmas gift for him.

The Air Scout. By Herbert Strang. (Henry Frowde, Hodder & Stoughton, 6*s*.)



—Aeroplane stories are now as common as flies on a summer day, but few aerial adventures are recounted which are sufficiently exciting, and at the same time within the bounds of possibility. That the aeroplane will play an important part in the next great European war cannot for a moment be doubted, and in the story under review Mr. Strang demonstrates to what enormous possibilities it can be put. Yet never for a moment does the author allow his imagination to outrun his scientific knowledge, with the result that we have, not only a very readable book, but also one that is highly instructive. It is said that H.R.H. the Prince of Wales is a great admirer of Mr. Strang's works, and it is certain that His Royal Highness's example is followed by a great number of the boys of the empire. "The Air Scout" tells of the invasion of Northern Australia by the Chinese, and of the adventures that in consequence befall the Australian hero and his English cousin. "The Flying Boat" (3*s*. 6*d*.) is another excellent story by Mr. Strang, and both books are magnificently illustrated in colour. Captainites who would like to have a list of the many splendid books for boys just published by Messrs. Henry Frowde and Hodder & Stoughton should drop a post-card to 20, Warwick Square, E.C., for their catalogue.

Not Cricket. By Harold Avery. (S. W. Partridge, 5*s*.)—Readers of THE CAPTAIN need no introduction to Mr. Avery's work, and it need only be said that in this tale he gives us of his very best. It is a school story of the sort which is irresistible to the boy reader, and it is greatly enhanced by five excellent illustrations in colour by Mr. Ernest Prater. Messrs. Partridge are to be congratulated on having such a fine book in their list.

John Temple. By Ralph Durand. (Macmillan & Co., 6*s*.)—This is a stirring story of Francisco Barreto's attempt, nearly three and a half centuries ago, to found a great Portuguese empire in South Africa. The author has kept very faithfully to historical accuracy, and his tale is none the less engrossing for that. The hero is John Temple, an Englishman who is made prisoner by the Portuguese in India, and forced to join the expedition to overthrow Monomatapa, "The Lord of the Mountain." "The reader," as the author says in the preface, "will easily distinguish which is fact and which is fiction if he remembers this—that all that is best in the book is fact, and that the rest is the product of my imagination."

The Boys' Book of Warships. By J. R. Howden. (Grant Richards, 6*s*.)—Mr. J. R. Howden is too modest. His new work "The Boys' Book of Warships," should be retitled "The World's Story of Sea Power." For it is much, very much, more than a book which every boy will appreciate and enjoy. It is a volume that no naval student who desires to be up to date can afford to go without. With the assistance of more than a hundred splendid photographs Mr. Howden has painted a fascinating picture of naval development from the days when Seti, King of Egypt, swept his seas in ships of Lebanon timber to the present moment, when, in her 32,000-ton *Rio de Janeiro*, Brazil is building the greatest leviathan afloat. There is not an adjunct of the art of shipwright and engineer which our author does not illuminate; and this is just where Mr. Howden "has the pull" over his brother experts who write of ships and shipping in our papers. To the layman their jargon is so often unintelligible. Nothing could be better than Mr. Howden's chapters on submarines, guns, and the work and working of a man-of-war.

The Winning of the Golden Spurs. By Percy F. Westerman. (Nisbet, 5*s*.)—Those

readers also expressed the keen interest with which they followed Mr. Westerman's "The Sea Monarch" in our last volume will learn from his latest story that the author's power is by no means restricted to modern tales of the sea. Golden spurs were won in earlier days, and this tale deals with a time when the country was overrun with robbers, when outlaws sought sanctuary in abbeys, and when no youth who could loose a shaft had long to wait for an opportunity to do so with effect. Naturally there is plenty of fighting all through the book, and the career of certain stalwart archers is followed throughout the battles with Philip of France until the Black Prince's great fight at Crécy, which is also an eventful day for the hero, for it is through gallantry on that eventful day that he is made Sir Raymond Revyngton.

The Book of Football. By E. H. D. Sewell. (J. M. Dent & Sons, 5s. net.)—Dedicated to "The British Schoolboy in whatever part of the Empire he may be Living and Learning to Play the Game," this book is sure to be widely read by all boys who care about our winter game. Both Rugby and Association football are discussed in this excellent work, and the reader is sure to pick up many a hint that will be of the greatest importance to him on the field of play. Mr. Sewell has a splendid record both as a player and a writer about football, and his latest work will considerably add to his laurels. He has many good yarns to tell and personal reminiscences, and never was a text-book written in a cheerier or more delightful vein. If all lessons were taught as invitingly as Mr. Sewell teaches us the lesson of football, "swotting" would not be half such a dull business.

The Boys' Guide. By Archibald Williams, B.A. (Thos. Nelson & Sons, 5s.)—This volume will be warmly welcomed by the large number of readers to whom Mr. Williams is already well known through his articles in THE CAPTAIN, and such books as "The Romance of Modern Invention," and "How it Works." The first thing the ordinary person does after picking up a new illustrated book is to look at the pictures; so to the illustrations we will give our attention first. We can say right away that as a whole they constitute one of the best series we have ever seen in a book written avowedly for boys. In keeping with the title of the work they are instructive, each one showing either what something is or how something is done; how to place the "field" in cricket, how to beat a hedge when shooting, how to distinguish thirteen types of locomotives, how to fold a coat, how to read an ordnance map, how to test the magnification of a pair of field-glasses, how to prune a rose, and so on. Among decided novelties we note a map devoted to the important schools of England, Wales, and Scotland, and another restricted to the most interesting of London sights. The frontispiece—reproduced from a photograph, representing an African native clearing a string stretched more than eight feet above the ground—will give food for thought to our high-jumpers! If space permitted we should like to say more about the illustrations, several hundred in number, and all as carefully drawn as they are practically useful. Any fear that "The Boys' Guide" might be of the stodgy kind is quickly allayed by a glance at the Table of Contents. This shows that a generous portion of the book (some 220 out of 560 pages) is devoted to our national games and sports, a liberal amount to hobbies, and the balance to matter which will recommend the volume to the boy as much as to the parent. Cycles and cycling, riding, sailing, sporting guns and rifles, gardening, the keeping of pets, birds and birds'-nesting, how to choose and use tools, how to form a library—this is just a selection from some seventy items. The multitudinous hints and tips are given pithily so that they may be remembered easily, the eye being assisted by side-headings in bold type; and if the reader wants to turn up anything he has the assistance of a ten-page index. We observe with pleasure that a dozen pages are assigned to "Books to Read," also that to the end of most of the chapters is appended a list of cheap books which deal with the subject just treated. This is a valuable feature. A special word should also be given to an excellent little article by Mr. Howard Penton, the illustrator of the volume, on how to draw. We can recommend "The Boys' Guide" unreservedly as a first-rate Christmas present. Any boy who soon tires of its pages must indeed be hard to please.

Life in Ponds and Streams. By W. Furneaux, F.R.G.S. (Longmans, 3s. 6d. net.)—Did you ever *hear* a snail feed? You can if you listen attentively. Do you know why young tadpoles hang together in clusters on the surface of pond-weeds, and struggle incessantly with

each other for the best places in the queue? Have you guessed that the dragonflies hover in mid-stream, just out of reach from either bank, for the set purpose of baffling the kind intentions of the collector? Did you know that many of the frog's victims do not perish in its maw, but pass unhurt to the animal's digestive pouch, where they die slowly of suffocation? In short, have you any idea that one dip of your net into any shallow stream may draw out sufficient material for a volume of natural history? I suppose not. Very few professed naturalists even have seen all the species of aquatic life that frequent a stagnant pool. But Mr. W. Furneaux, F.R.G.S., has. And after reading his new book, "Life in Ponds and Streams," I am tempted to buy myself (says a CAPTAIN reviewer) a net, a lens, a microscope, and a dipping bottle, and enjoy forthwith the delights of a collector. Mr. Furneaux has made my mouth water. But this book is only one of a series that Messrs. Longmans have published, a series which includes, all by Mr. Furneaux, "British Butterflies and Moths," "The Sea-Shore," "The Outdoor World," "Field and Woodland Plants; and "British Birds," by W. H. Hudson, C.M.Z.S., and "The Monkey Folk of South Africa" (5*s.* net), by F. W. Fitzsimons, F.Z.S.

Elizabethan Adventures upon the Spanish Main. Edited by A. M. Hyamson. (Routledge, 3*s.* 6*d.*)—The taste for books of travel is a decidedly healthy one, and the enormous increase in the output of this class of literature has been one of the most marked features of the modern book market. The book under notice, however, is not a modern book, but an excellent selection of passages from the writings published, after the most persevering research, by the famous Elizabethan geographer Richard Hakluyt. Accounts are given of the exploits of Drake, and the discoveries of Ralegh; of the slave-hunting expeditions of Hawkins, and of the great Armada; of wrecks, of fights at sea, of pirates, privateers, and pillaged native villages, and of perilous voyages in many regions of the earth. In this collection the spelling has been modernised; but the plain, vigorous, and often charming language of the diligent Hakluyt remains.

A Middy of the King. By Harry Collingwood. (Blackie & Son, 5*s.*)—An enthralling naval romance of the late eighteenth century. It deals with the stirring adventures of a midshipman named Delamere, whose ship, after a furious encounter with pirates, founders in a gale. Delamere is picked up, after much suffering, by the servants of a Haytian planter, but later falls into the hands of negro outlaws. In vivid narrative the author tells how his hero escapes, and plans an expedition that leads to the complete overthrow of the pirates. Messrs. Blackie, 50, Old Bailey, E.C., will send their illustrated list of new books to any Captainite who writes to them for it, and I should advise all of you to do so. Messrs. Blackie have just published, at popular prices, works by such famous authors for boys as Captain Brereton, George MacDonald, Percy F. Westerman, and others.

All Sorts of Story Book. Edited by Andrew Lang. (Longmans, Green & Co., 6*s.*)—One of those jolly books that you can take up at any time, and be certain of getting a pleasant half-hour in the reading, is the new Andrew Lang volume, "The All Sorts of Stories Book." Some are real stories that happened, some are taken out of books, and they are all good. Who was the real Robinson Crusoe, and how did he get away from the island where the *Cinque Ports* landed him and promptly sailed away? And how did Edmond Dantes escape from his tight prison in the Chateau D'If? In the thirty exciting narratives that make the book there are shipwreck stories, and treasure hunt stories, and adventures of English kings. One of the best stories in the book is that telling the adventures of Loreta Velazquez, the Spanish girl who put on a lieutenant's uniform, and became a famous spy in the American Civil War. Her adventures are an example of pluck and daring the possession of which any man would envy, and Loreta was only twenty! "It is strange to think that by the time peace was made she was only twenty-two. Her fame had spread throughout the North as well as the South. Her energy and restlessness never forsook her, and, after two visits to Europe and South America, she is to be heard of as a miner on the slopes of the Pacific coast."

A Tenderfoot with Peary. By George Borup. (Eveleigh Nash, 6*s.* net.)—"It is a terrible thing to be cold—cold unto death

itself. When gnawing hunger is added to the pangs of cold, and through long hardship the heroic spark flickers and is about to go out, when it requires the combined thoughts of home, friends, and dying comrades who must be saved to arouse one more effort to break the bonds of death, the escape from the ice-king and his terrors is indeed a thing for which we must be devoutly grateful." So writes Rear-Admiral G. W. Melville in a preface to Mr. Borup's stirring narration of Peary's triumphant voyage to the North Pole. It is a great book this, full of splendid description, and informative in the highest degree of the work that a Polar expedition entails. Yet it is told in a breezy way which makes the reading altogether charming. A pathetic note is only struck when the death of their comrade, Ross Marvin, is related. Ross Marvin, Macmillan, and the author had gathered in Peary's *igloo*. "Somebody suggested a sing-song, so we went through all our college songs, ending with :—

"*Amici usque ad aras*
Deep graven on each heart,
Shall be found, unwavering, true,
When we from life shall part.

As we were shaking hands we wondered, 'When shall we four meet again.' As the captain said, 'When you say good-bye to a fellow here you never know when you'll meet him again.'" They separated, each going their different ways. "We guessed and groped, North, ever North, with many a twist and turn." Then the time for reuniting arrived; Marvin's sledge came, and the dogs, but never Marvin himself. He reached Kudlooktoo (the Eskimo) and anxiously asked him for news. "Marvin gone! Young ice. I tol' him look out. I tol' him look out," said he, in a broken voice, pointing downwards. And then the author pays a fine tribute to Ross Marvin, and the part he played in the success of the expedition. "I am sure Marvin met death in a grand struggle in an attempt to heighten the glory of his country, battling alone against the forces of Nature in the Arctic wilds. I feel sure that he was proud of his finish, and that a smile was on his lips to the last, and I can ask no more of fate than that it should grant me such a superb end." To have won such an epitaph is not to have died in vain. To all those who would read the thrilling details of the greatest adventure of modern times this book is to be commended.

The Perils of Peterkin. By Robert Leighton. (Jarrold & Sons, 2s. 6d.)—The reader whom Mr. Robert Leighton fails to thrill must be uncommonly cold-blooded. Peter James Beamish—commonly called "Peterkin"—is an adventurer as splendid as any Mr. Leighton has given to us, and what Peterkin does not manage to accomplish in the matter (as our lawyers would say) of perilous escapes by flood and field is scarcely worth considering. For myself I am very grateful that I never met Crouching Panther, the awful chief of the Blackfeet, and have kept my fingers out of the pie of the filigree necklet. I had much rather that Peterkin bore all these trials for me, for so I have been able to enjoy the rare entertainment of watching him struggle through them. This is a capital book; capitally got up, capitally printed, and capitally designed for making the hours fly on the dullest, wettest, most unbearable day in the holidays.

Round the Year with Nature. By W. J. Claxton. (Routledge, 7s. 6d.)—A fellow may sometimes feel "a bit fed up" with fiction—one doesn't need to be a prig or a B.P. Scout to be a lover and observer of nature. Wandering through the woods or over the fields, if a man keeps his eyes opened, he may perchance surprise one or two, at all events of Mother Nature's thousand and one secrets; may, as the poet says, find—

". . . tongues in trees,
Books in running brooks, sermons in stones,
And good in everything."

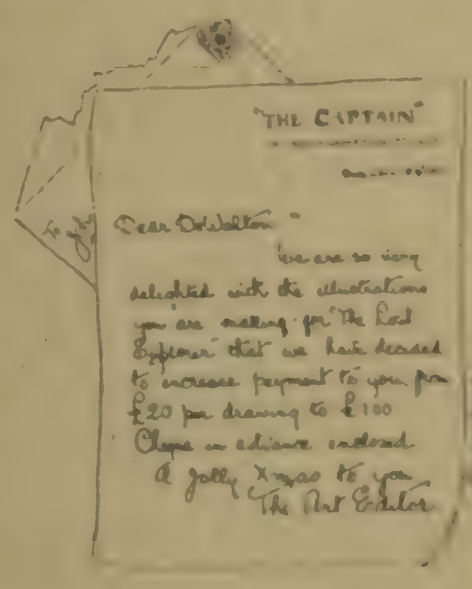
It all depends on where and how to look. One of the most charming books we have come across this season will teach you this. It is "Round the Year with Nature," by Mr. W. J. Claxton, author of "The Boys' Book of Angling and Rambling." Maybe at first glance you might think that it is a trifle too deep for the common or garden boy, but on dipping into it you'll find that the very reverse is the case.

No better Christmas present for a friend could be imagined than the last volume of THE CAPTAIN, as illustrated above. Its price is six shillings, and it would indeed make a handsome gift. It contains two fine serials, no less than thirty-two complete stories of school and adventure, abundantly illustrated, and scores of interesting articles.

SOUTHAMPTON STREET,
STRAND, LONDON.

To you all, boys and old boys both, "A Merry Christmas!" Though the wish may seem to you a trifle premature, seeing that this page will be in your hands before the month of fogs has left us, it lacks not sincerity for that. Needs must nowadays to be early, and the heralds of Santa Claus must follow hard on the heels of those that fling the last faggot on the flames of Guy Fawkes. In these days (hark ye, all who inquire why Christmas numbers must be published so early), it is not good enough merely to be up to date; you must take Time, not gently by the forelock, as the wise people of old advised us, but violently—lock, stock, and barrel—in an effort to be ahead of the calendar. The art of anticipation is the "Open sesame!" to success.

So, though I wish you now "A Merry Christmas," it does not mean that I shall not wish it you again in my next number, which will be published on December 20th. And although this is officially our Christmas Number, it does not follow that the one you will all be reading on Christmas Day itself will be devoid of Yuletide interest. Indeed, this will not be the case, for there are one or two fine stories which I have especially reserved so that you may read them round the Christmas fire. I may mention "The Cavalier in Grey," a ghostly story by Gunby Hadath, which will thrill and entertain you; and "Burying the Hatchet," a splendid tale of school adventure in the Christmas term, by Harold Avery, and one which I had originally intended to use in this number. Thus, though the Christmas Number is now in your hands, I can promise you plenty more good Christmas fare for the best of all days itself.



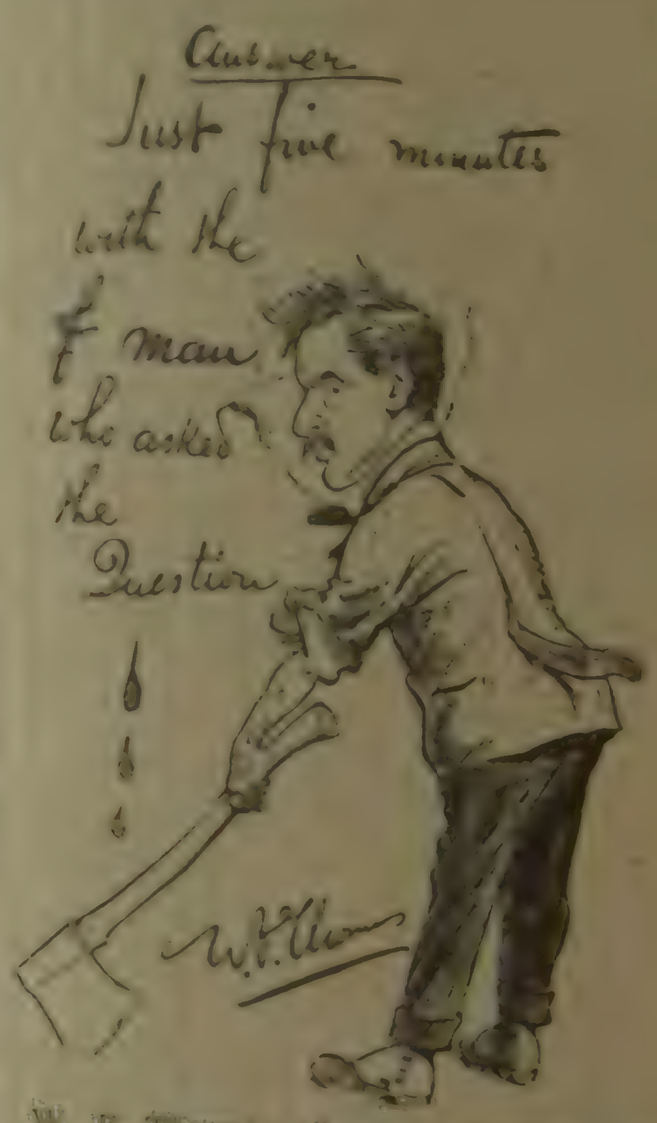
John de Walton thinks a suitable Christmas present would be a big commission at £100 a sketch.

This extraordinary year will not, I imagine, close without providing us with yet another nine days' wonder; 1911 has been a year of sensation. In it we have seen the most glorious Coronation of all times, which passed in a demonstration of loyalty, home and colonial, that the world will never forget. In it also we have seen the military siege of a London street—a touch of war in the heart of the City. We have seen nations at each other's throats, thrones overturned, and kings deposed. In it the mechanic's skill has demonstrated its conquest over the air, and the aeroplane has become a force in the world of commerce. We have seen strikes of incredible strength, and schoolboys pitiably imitating their elders' example. We have enjoyed—or suffered—a summer of record heat, and the world of sport has given us new champions.

I cannot think that such a year will allow

itself to fizzle tamely out without giving us one last kick as a parting remembrance. Maybe we shall get a Christmas of the "good old days," with a record frost and blinding snowstorms. We often hear laments for the winters that used to be; but if such were to happen now, how should we greet them?

To be snowed up seems very good fun when you read of it in a story, but would you not realise its disadvantages were you to suffer them? There would be no football or hockey, or outdoor games of any sort; no getting about to visit friends, or to go to Christmas parties. In fact, an old-fashioned Christmas would be no end of a bore.



W. F. Thomas adopts a querulous attitude.

If I were Santa Claus I should ask you all to drop me a post-card and say just what you would like for a Christmas present. Then I would spend a busy Christmas Eve in delivering precisely what you asked for. But I am not Santa Claus, so please do not take the trouble to send post-cards, for in my private capacity I fear I should be unable to satisfy your demands. Some fellows have rather a large idea what Christmas presents should be like. One Christmas a gentleman laid down for his son a complete railway system in a large shed adjoining his house. There was nearly a quarter of a mile of 3in. gauge rails, and the whole affair cost almost a thousand pounds. A five-year-old Vanderbilt once was presented with an electrical motor-car, about the size of a goat-chaise, complete in every detail, for his own use. This luxurious present cost twice as much as a full-sized car. A young savage king had especially stuffed for him a leopard, which was fitted with a growling apparatus and a contrivance so that the animal could roar and leap in a lifelike manner. The little daughter of an American millionaire had a mansion given to her that cost £400,000. I am afraid that I have not any little gifts like these about me.

However, in a moment of generosity, I asked those artists who chanced to drop into my office what they would like for a Christmas present. The result you will see in the sketches that illustrate these pages. I am reluctantly forced to the conclusion that artists are mercenary folk; so many of them seem to think that mere money is a desirable thing. T. M. R. Whitwell seems to be the only contented one amongst them, for his reply was "Nothing." I am pleased to be able to announce that I satisfied his craving. W. F. Thomas considered the problem so long that all he got was a headache. He is now suffering from nerves, as you will see by his picture. If I can see my way to giving W. E. Wigfull the world he shall have it; but he must first send me stamps for postage!

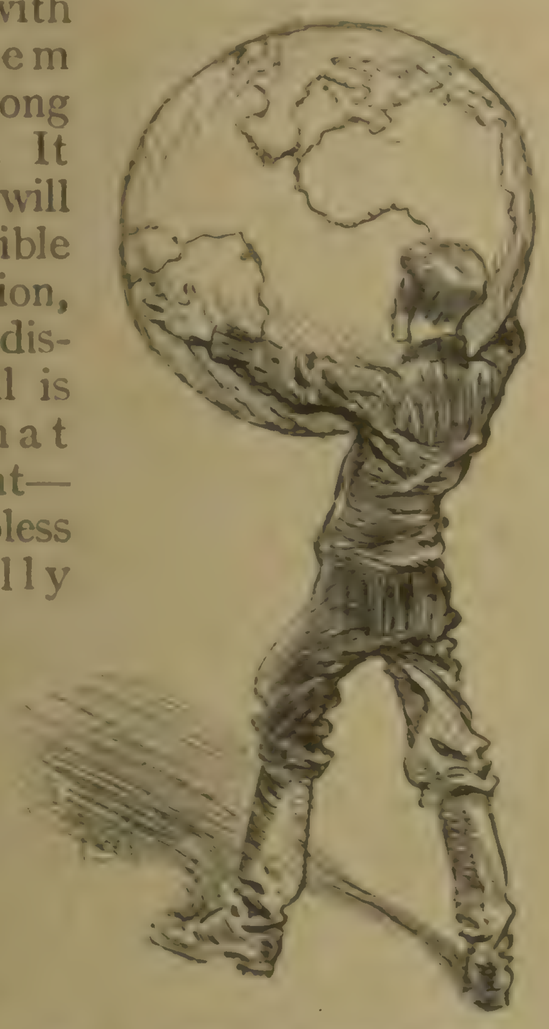
An appeal to Captainites. In a few weeks we shall be commemorating the birthday of Charles Dickens, the man who practically made the modern Christmas, and the man in whose character above all things was a wonderful love of children. No author has pictured the miseries that poor children endure in more poignant fashion than this great writer of the nineteenth century. Through him have many a poor child's sufferings been alleviated, for the British

H. M. Brock wishes for nothing more than vast wealth.

public are not slow to remedy evils when it is pointed out to them that evils exist.

At such a time as this, therefore, it is fitting that in honour of "the children's friend" we should endeavour to do something to help the many poor little unfortunates whose Christmas-time, alas! is but a time of sorrow and suffering. Sir William Treloar, who is doing such a noble work with his Home for Crippled Children at Alton, has invited readers of THE CAPTAIN to establish a CAPTAIN Cot therein, the expenses of which cot will be entirely paid for by contributions from Captainites. I readily agreed to his suggestion, for I feel sure that hundreds of my readers will be only too glad to spare a little of their pocket money for such a splendid purpose. I want Captainites to understand that this is *their* cot, that an announcement to that effect will be placed above it, and that the little occupant of it will be very grateful to them for giving him or her an opportunity to be cured of a terrible disease.

Now will you help?—I firmly believe that Captainites will endorse my action of agreeing to the establishment of this cot. I do not think I shall be disappointed in the amount of support I shall receive. Think for a moment what it means, this home that Sir William Treloar has founded. It means that every year scores of little children come to Alton seriously crippled, and in some cases hopelessly so, with life before them nothing but a long continuous agony. It means that they will receive every possible care and attention, that they will discover life after all is worth living, that they are taught—crippled and helpless though originally they be—trades they can follow in spite of their deformity. And many of them *are* permanently cured.



W. E. Wigfull would be satisfied with the World!

Think what it is to be *poor* and crippled; think of the horrors of slum life when you have not even the physical strength to struggle for your living. I do not believe when you realise

Bert Thomas says he would like an Old Age Pension for a Christmas Box, and he would then take a small holding far, far away from unsympathetic Editors.

such things you will grudge a little offering at the shrine of these little ones.

Just send a post-card to me, the Editor, THE CAPTAIN, Southampton Street, Strand, W.C., saying you will support THE CAPTAIN Cot. Do not send any money to me, for Sir William Treloar has kindly consented to keep all the accounts in connection with the cot. All I want is a post-card from you saying that you will help. I will send on your promise of help to Sir William Treloar. He will send you a special card on which you can enter your own gift and any contribution which your chums and relatives may give you. All moneys should be sent to Sir William Treloar at his London office, 61, Moorgate Street, E.C.; and please do not think any sum is too small to send. Give what you can spare, and ask your friends to help also, and in this way the cot can be maintained and some helpless little cripple made strong again. And, believe me, I cannot reiterate the point too often that this Cripples' Home is one of the most deserving charities you can possibly assist. Articles upon it have appeared in THE CAPTAIN before—articles which have fully explained

the good work that is accomplished. Over three hundred children have already been cured at Alton; let us all help to rescue more from the clutches of fell diseases. Let THE CAPTAIN Cot play a big part in this noble enterprise. Send a post-card promising support to me *now*.

I must thank very cordially the large number of readers who have sent congratulatory letters concerning the *Boys' Best Story Paper*, and I can assure them that every effort is being made to maintain the high standard of excellence set by the earlier numbers. The most popular of the serials is perhaps the scouting story "Be Prepared," by Mr. E. Le Breton Martin; but the school story and the two adventure serials each run it very close. The numerous complete stories and the interesting articles have also been the subject of many appreciatory remarks. The *Boys' Best*, the best weekly story paper in the world, comes out every Thursday, price one penny.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

R. M. G. (Clacton-on-Sea).—You should write for full particulars concerning the prospects of securing a post as a wireless telegraph operator in one of the Colonies to the secretary of the Emigrants' Information Bureau, of 31, Broadway, Westminster, S.W., stating your age, qualifications, and any other personal information bearing on your requirements. Be sure to give concise details as to your knowledge of telegraphy.

J. H. (Gosforth).—I am making arrangements for an article on hockey to appear in an early number.

J. W. D. (Glasgow).—A position in the British Consular Service is a rather important one, and cannot be said to be easy of attainment. Candidates must obtain a nomination from the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and inquiries must first be addressed to the Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office, S.W. It will help a person to obtain a nomination if he has been called to the Bar, enrolled as a solicitor, taken a degree, or served for a time in a commercial house of good standing. The examination fee is £4, and the candidate, after having been nominated, will be examined in the following subjects: English composition, French, either German or Spanish, the principles of British Mercantile Law (shipping—negotiable instruments, bills of exchange, and promissory notes—contracts for the carriage of goods—contracts for marine insurance, bottomry, and respondentia), arithmetic (to vulgar and decimal fractions, and including English and metrical weights and measures), commercial geography, and political economy.

This correspondent also inquires about the prospects of a young man who goes to India for tea-planting. Can any Colonial Captainite give me some information on this point?

"Loughborough Captainite."—I do not advise you to seek spare time employment of the kind you hint at. Your time just now is worth more to you than the few shillings you might earn in this way. You will be much better employed in fitting yourself for advancement in whatever line of daily work you may have started upon; or, if you have not yet fixed any career for yourself, then qualify for one. Anyone, of course, may have a hobby to follow in his leisure time; but as soon as he regards it only as a means of adding to his earnings it is a hobby no longer, and has little of the recreative value of one.

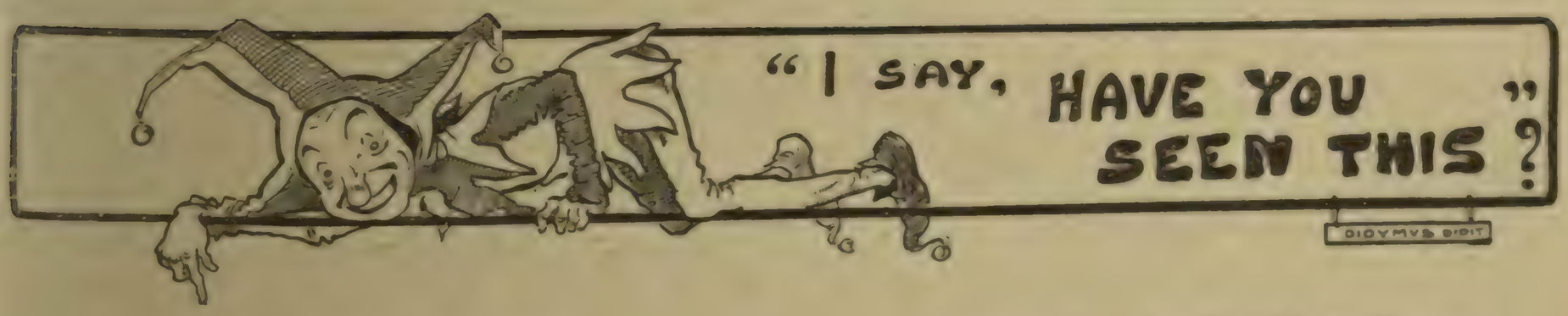
Hylma B.—Most certainly girls can join THE CAPTAIN Club. In fact, the Club Captain tells me he has some badges especially made for lady Captainites with a brooch fastening. Why not write to him to be enrolled?

J. C. V. C.—For most Civil Service examinations mathematics, or some branches of the subject, are essential, and so many marks can be lost through weakness in the subject as very greatly to lessen one's chances of success. Particulars of any of the examinations can be obtained from the Civil Service Commissioners, Burlington House, London, S.W., and a large stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed when writing to them. In regard to your cricket query, instances have been known in which bowlers have been equally dexterous with both hands, and as you have been so far so successful there seems no reason why you should not emulate them. Practise hard, and see if you improve.

A. M. G. (Westminster).—It is difficult to give advice of the kind you want unless one knows the person he is addressing intimately. Have you talked over the matter seriously with your parents? Could you not get some light clerical work while you prepare for a Civil Service examination? As you have matriculated and taken other good certificates the work of preparation should not be very hard for you. Also, the fees at many good Civil Service colleges are not so very high. Please do not use the word "hopeless." You are scores of years too young.

"Edinburgh Academy."—I noted with very great pleasure the success of the Edinburgh Academy in carrying off the Ashburton Shield this year, and at once made arrangements to include a photograph of the winning team in our next number. Just before going to press, however, I found that pressure on our space was so great that I was obliged to leave this item out, as well as one or two other things that I had prepared. The feat of your school was certainly a notable one, and I heartily congratulate the team on its achievement.

Acknowledgments and thanks are also due to **Douglas Dixie, A. W. Holthum, "Nemo," T. D. M. Scott, E. P. Smith, H. A. Dade, J. G. Strachan, A. Britton,** and **H. J. Bunker.**



A Lesson in E'iquette

THE captain was trying to impress upon the sailor the importance of saying "Sir" in addressing his superior.

"How's her head?" he asked.

"Nor'-by-east," answered the old tar, gruffly.

Another trial was without success.

"Let me take the wheel," said the skipper, "and you ask me the question."

"'Ow's her head?" roared the sailor.

"Nor'-by-east, *sir*," replied the captain.

"Keep her so, my man," said the old tar, "while I goes forward and has a smoke."

***

Very Likely

THE railway station of Meridian, Texas, is about a mile from the business part of town. One night a weary travelling man said to the darky who was driving him to the hotel:—

"Old man, why did they put this station so far from town?"

The darky scratched his head in thought, and replied:—

"Wall, boss, I's fo'ced to admit dat I hasn't give de matter s'ficient cogitation, but jes' jumped up fer a answer like dis. I s'pose dey done dat so as to have de station as near as possible to de railway."

Geography in the Schoolroom

THE following are genuine answers given by boys in school:—

"America" from the Latin word *amo* "I love," and *rice*, because the Americans like eating rice.

New Zealand—because Captain Cook when he saw it said "I see new land," hence New-see-land.

One boy, when asked, "Why are days longer in summer and shorter in winter?" replied, "Because heat expands and cold contracts."

Another, being asked to define the equator, replied, "The equator is an imaginary line running round the world once in twenty-four hours."

***

Helpful

THE agent for the Nothing-like-it Filing System called on a merchant to whom he had sold a "system" a few days previously, and inquired how the device was working.

"Great!" said the merchant.

"Good!" said the agent, rubbing his hands. "And how is business?"

"Business?" echoed the merchant. "Oh, we have stopped business to attend to the filing system."

THE CHRISTMAS PRESENT

PAINSTAKING PETER (with pardonable pride): "There, auntie —it's a little armchair that I've been making for you."

With trembling fingers Jimmy pressed the bugle to his lips. His life depended on the call he sounded. There was a roar of musketry as the notes rang out, and Gunga Ram came toppling over almost upon the bugler's head.

For the Honour of Ours

A thrilling story which tells how a young bugler, in face of the gravest peril, saved the honour of the regiment

By J. B. RAYMOND

ZIP!

A bullet flattened itself against the rock about a yard above the head of Private Dennis O'Flaherty, and then dropped at his side like any pebble.

"Good afternoon to yez," observed Private Dennis, with most offensive familiarity. "Now Oi'll see if there's an answer expicted."

He peeped from behind his boulder cautiously.

"Oi don't think there is, but being polite Oi'll sind one all the same," and he sighted his rifle with the utmost nicety.

"There! Till the gintleman up yander that Musther O'Flaherty hopes he's as well as can be expicted," observed the Hibernian, pulling the trigger. The fact that "Musther" O'Flaherty was one of the crack shots of his regiment somewhat dulled the polished politeness of the message.

Simultaneously with the report of the rifle Private O'Flaherty saw far down the valley something white topple from the hillside.

"As well as can be expicted," muttered the gallant private, and he curled himself up a little more compactly behind his boulder, for his successful shot had drawn a regular fusillade upon him.

A small campaign against a refractory hill tribe in the Himalayas does not offer many chances of distinction to Thomas Atkins. It was simply a case of potting and being potted at from behind boulders, followed by the swift retreat of the wary marksmen as the regiment approached.

"More like 'hunt the slipper' than anything else," was the ceaseless comment of O'Flaherty.

The braying of a bugle ordering the troops to advance interrupted his meditations, and, slinging his rifle, O'Flaherty stepped out into the open.

Down the valley went the troops at the double quick, driving the enemy before them, but affording greater scope to their marksmanship.

"Moind yer hid, Jimmy, me bhoy," grinned O'Flaherty to the little bugler who strutted along as bravely as any.

"And you mind yer business, O'Flaherty," retorted Jimmy, who greatly disliked the smallest approach to "protection."

The argument was not continued, as Jimmy at that moment received the order to sound the halt, and the troops once again sought cover.

And so the day passed on—advance and take cover, advance and take cover—until night fell, and called whites and blacks to a halt; the former to bivouac, the latter to plot and carry out what mischief they could.

"Hallo, Jimmy!" was the greeting of O'Flaherty, as the boy approached the charmed circle of which the Hibernian was the presiding genius. "Set yersilf down, and get outside this."

Jimmy sat down, and was soon busily engaged in getting outside "this." On the regimental roll he was Bugler James Carr, but to officers and men, from Colonel Marwood downwards, he was Jimmy. He was small for his years—some fourteen or so—and, to tell truth, somewhat ugly; his nose distinctly belonged to the snub variety, his hair was not flaxen and was perfectly straight, his mouth was rather large, and his eyes were of a prosaic grey; altogether he was as unlike the angelically beautiful bugler of cheap battle-prints as he could be.

But he had the right stuff in him for all that. It was his first campaign, and though at the beginning the whistle of a bullet caused him to duck and turn pale, in the end he became as contemptuous of them as O'Flaherty himself. And no one was more jealous of the honour of the regiment. To see the air with which he said "Ours," "Our fellows," "Our chaps," was a revelation.

Talk proceeded briskly round the bivouac fire that night. The great topic was the enemy, of course, especially their head-piece, Gunga Ram.

"Dirty renegade," observed one of the company.

"Wot was 'e afore 'e comed to this?" inquired another.

"In the 46th native regiment," was the brusque reply.

"D'ye mean he deserted?" asked Jimmy, in horrified tones.

"That's it!"

"What a dirty cad!" replied Jimmy. "Selfish beggar, too."

"Silfish!" echoed O'Flaherty, in surprise, "Dirrthy schoundril, if ye loike, but silfish?"

"Yes, selfish!" retorted Jimmy, indignantly. "What about the feelings of the other chaps in his regiment? Why, he's disgraced 'em all."

This was a new way of regarding the question where a native regiment was concerned, for O'Flaherty—though he kept it discreetly dark at the present moment—O'Flaherty had never associated honour with a native regiment. With astute diplomacy he kept the conversation concentrated upon the "dirrthy schoundril" aspect of the renegade's character.

"Marrk my words," he began, emphatically, "that spalpeen'll do us a mischief afore we've done with him; he don't care a pig's whisper what happens to those yellin' divils with him, an' he'd slaughter every wan av them to sting us up a bit."

"He'd slaughter everyone of 'em even to insult us," observed another, "let alone layin' us out."

"You mean he'd like to attack the honour of Ours if he could?" inquired Jimmy, in awe-struck tones.

"That's just what I do mean," was the reply. "And it won't be from want of tryin' if he don't. 'E's bin a regular, so he knows how to hurt us."

"But he could never touch the honour of Ours," said the boy, scornfully; "not if he tried all he's worth."

"Good for you, Jimmy!" said someone passing at that moment.

Jimmy, flushed all over, sprang to his feet and saluted, for the speaker was Captain Hillyard, who had gained his V.C. in the last hill war.

Conversation continued briskly for a while, then remarks became more and more desultory until it ceased altogether, and only the pacing of the sentries disturbed the stillness.

But hundreds of lynx-like eyes were watching the sleeping camp, and hundreds of feet were coming nearer and nearer with catlike stealth and noiselessness.

A sentry, possessed perchance of that peculiar danger sense which reaches its highest development in the wild animal, peered into the darkness, opened his mouth to challenge, and then thought better of it. A couple of minutes later a pebble disturbed from its resting-place fell against a heap of others.

This decided the watcher.

"Who goes there?" he challenged, presenting his musket.

The answer was a pandemonium of yells and a volley of rifle-shots.

In an instant each man had grasped his rifle and sprung to his feet; but before they could fall into proper position a horde of yelling, frantic hillmen were upon them.

Some sharp fighting followed, rendered additionally exciting by the darkness; but finally, the troops having made their formation, the attacking tribe were beaten off, leaving a score of dead behind them.

The roll was called, but to the name of Carr there was no boyish cry of "*Adsum*." Perturbation filled almost every breast, and immediately roll-call was over search was made for the missing bugler and others. The latter were all accounted for, but even after the most exhaustive and extensive search Jimmy was nowhere to be found.

The officers looked at one another nonplussed.

"Not the custom of these chaps to take prisoners," said Hillyard. "Wonder what's happened to the little chap."

But O'Flaherty was much more positive.

"Marrk my words," he said to his particular circle; "if there ain't the finger of that spalpeen of a Gunga Ram in the business may me counthry disown me."

However there was no more to be done for that night at least, and the men lay down again to wait impatiently for the morning.

But O'Flaherty was not far wrong. Jimmy passed that night in the hillmen's "headquarters," trussed up like a fowl, and greatly apprehensive as to his captors' intentions towards him. Propped up against a rock he surveyed the group squatting round the fire.

That big fellow was evidently Gunga Ram; he knew this from the deference paid to the renegade by the rest of the company. But Jimmy's lips curled in contempt as he contemplated the deserter and despoiler of the honour of his regimental comrades. The group were conversing in a patois peculiar to their tribe, and it was just as well that Jimmy had no knowledge of it. But one word caused him to prick up his ears; it was first used by Gunga Ram, who burst into laughter immediately after, and subsequently the other members of

the company made clumsy attempts to pronounce it.

It was the English word "honour."

"Wonder what they're up to," thought Jimmy, in amazement.

Gunga Ram was speaking at that moment. "Truly, thy head is as the rock," he cried, addressing a crestfallen hillman.

The latter had been prevented by Gunga Ram from piously thrusting a dirk into Jimmy's stomach during the brush in the night, and he had seen fit to complain to his comrades of such impious conduct on the part of Gunga.

"Truly, thy head is as the rock," cried Gunga, contemptuously. "What should we have gained hadst thou slain the blower of the bugle? Naught!"

The hillmen shook their heads doubtfully. The slaying of an enemy was so delightful a recreation that they could not be but disgusted at Gunga's sordidness in sacrificing such a noble sport for mere gain,

"More," continued Gunga, fully cognisant of what was passing through their minds—"what would our enemies have lost? No more than they have now. Instead of the blower being dead, and of no use, he is here. And we must use him," he added, with a sinister smile.

The others shook their heads approvingly. The words of this stranger from the south were undoubtedly the words of wisdom; now that they had the blower they must use him, and innumerable plans were born in their pleasingly inventive minds. Acting the part of a living target, serving the warriors as fuel, were among some of the "uses" it was suggested to put Jimmy to; one of them, evidently possessed of a deep sense of humour, proposed that they should saturate Jimmy's clothing with grease, set a light to him, and then let him run.

Gunga Ram listened to the chatter with a smile of contempt on his lips. What fools these barbarians were! As the speaker in O'Flaherty's circle remarked, he would have cheerfully sacrificed every man of them to injure or insult the white soldiers—he knew there was no hope of conquering them. Still, these barbarians were useful for the present, so he replied with the utmost smoothness:—

"The words of the hillmen are wise; but if their desires are carried out will our enemies be injured?"

The hillmen considered on this thing, and then grudgingly admitted that apart from some trifling inconvenience to Jimmy, the rest of their pursuers would be in nowise affected.

"Then listen to my words, my brethren," And Gunga Ram must have particularly desired their pleased attention ere he would have condescended to include them among his fraternal relatives. "Listen to my words, my brethren. Ye know that the white men pursuing us are brave."

They nodded their heads ruefully.

"Ye know that they are terrible in battle, caring naught for wounds or death."

"We know it!" was the answering chorus.

"Ye know that they laugh at your bullets and shouting." There was a trace of malice in this last remark.

"We know it!" replied the hillmen, after a short pause.

"And therefore, my brethren, ye can do nothing to their hurt," went on Gunga Ram, eagerly.

This was a bitter pill to swallow, and Gunga revealed his diplomacy by not waiting for an answer.

"But ye are wrong," he cried. "They can be wounded in such manner that the deepest of death-wounds seems as a scratch to that wound."

The audience expressed great delight, but nevertheless were somewhat sceptical about this strange wound. Could any wound be worse than the death-wound? Gunga was unanimously called upon to explain.

"They are brave, but they are fools, and they call their foolishness—honour! They are fools, for they hold it dearer than life."

But in his last sentence the wily Gunga made a false step.

"Not so!" cried an old hillman; "for then are we fools also, who hold vengeance dearer than life."

There was a chorus of protests. The astute Gunga saw his error, and instantly repaired it.

"They are fools, for they hold it dearer than vengeance," he purred.

"Then verily are they fools," was the general cry.

It took Gunga Ram a long while to secure approval for his project, and even then numerous concessions to popular sentiment had to be made; but the original plan stood, and a little before dawn, camp was struck, and they proceeded up the valley. Numerous halts were made; but Gunga was strangely fastidious that morning about the choice of a position for making a stand against the regiment's advance.

He found one that seemed to suit at last. As they took up their position Jimmy, still

bound hand and foot, heard the distant reveillé. And he smiled wanly.

"And what thinkest thou of the plan, O Gopal!" inquired Gunga Ram sneeringly, of a shifty-eyed warrior who looked at everybody apprehensively.

"Truly, it is a great one," replied Gopal, with palpably feigned enthusiasm.

Gopal had unfortunately given his beloved brethren cause to suspect his fidelity, and now passed his days in continual anticipation of a shot or stab from behind. Perhaps this will help to explain how Hillyard, who had been sent forward before dawn with a few men in order to reconnoitre, had a pleasant surprise.

"Hallo!" he cried. "What's this?"

Tearing towards them at a desperate speed was a solitary hillman; in one hand he bore a white rag.

"A deserter!" said Hillyard.

O'Flaherty and another secured him, and brought him to Hillyard, who spoke the patois well.

"Son of a dog, what brings thee here?" said Hillyard, roughly.

Gopal, for it was none other, salaamed almost to the earth.

"I repent my rebellion against the lord of the sahibs; and I bring the sahibs news."

"Think not that thy news shall save thee," replied Hillyard, who had interviewed such characters before. "We know all. What canst such as thou tell us?"

"The sahib does not know what I have to tell!"

Despite himself, Hillyard was impressed at the man's manner.

"Speak on," he commanded. "But shouldst thou speak a word that is not truth." He made a suggestive movement of his hand.

"I will speak truth," replied Gopal, with another salaam.

"Speak on!"

"The sahib doubtless wonders about the little blower of the trumpet."

Hillyard gripped Gopal by the wrist.

"Thou dog! Thou and thy brother dogs yonder have slain him."

"Nay, sahib!" cried Gopal, in most lively terror. "He is alive and well."

Hillyard heaved a sigh of relief.

"But it is for the sahibs to decide whether he remains so."

"What dost thou mean, dog?"

"Sahib! It is a plot of Gunga Ram, that son of darkness, that tiger——"

"Cease thy talk of Gunga Ram. What of him who blows the trumpet?"

"Sahib, Gunga Ram hath devised a plan to wound the—the——"

Gopal paused before attacking that strange word.

"Hasten, or I have thee shot!"

Gopal made an attempt at the word.

"Thou laughest at me!" said Hillyard in amazement, and he turned away.

"Nay, nay, sahib," cried Gopal, falling to his knees in a frenzy of terror. "'Tis a word used by all the sahibs, and they esteem it above vengeance and death."

He made another attempt at the word, and aided by Gopal's comment Hillyard this time comprehended.

"Ah! Honour is thy word."

"Yea, sahib, yea!" cried Gopal, in ecstasy. "Gunga Ram would wound it, and I have escaped to tell thee."

Hillyard was becoming thoroughly mystified.

"Speak on," he said, roughly.

"The blower on the trumpet in a very little while will be set at the head of a defile yonder," said Gopal, impressively. "Many, many rifles will cover him, and if the sahibs make a movement forward he will be blown from the earth. He must walk along that defile, and if he blow the tune that tells the sahibs to fall back all will be well. If he blow not they all fire."

Gopal did not add that as a concession to popular sentiment Gunga Ram had consented to his friends having a general sporting volley at Jimmy just when his journey was over, even if he did blow the retreat.

But the omission could not have staggered Hillyard more than the news.

"How far ahead are thy friends, dog?" he asked hurriedly.

Gopal gave him to understand it was about a mile.

"Conduct us thither!"

If Hillyard retained any doubts as to Gopal's sincerity they were all swept away by the deserter's reception of his command. Gopal grovelled at his feet.

"Nay, sahib, nay!" he shrieked. "For thee capture means death, but for me there will be something *before*."

There was such a horrible significance to the vague phrase, and Gopal's shudder was so genuine that Hillyard almost felt sorry for him.

"Stay thou here, then."

Gopal was profuse in his gratitude, and smiled

benevolently on the two men whom Hillyard told off to guard him.

"A mile, thou sayest?"

"The sahib cannot mistake the place; there is a bend in the valley just before."

Hillyard went on with his remaining men.

Propped up against a rock, bound and helpless, Jimmy surveyed his captors as they discussed his fate.

They soon came to the bend. "Careful, boys—they mustn't see us," said Hillyard, hoarsely.

After some careful manœuvring the whereabouts of the enemy was revealed to them.

Gunga Ram had indeed chosen his position well. On ahead of the regiment the hillsides bounding the valley approached each other and became precipitous, thus forming a defile of about 150yds. in length—the defile through which Jimmy would have to walk ere long blowing the retreat. Its walls were almost smooth, and its floor, except for a few stray boulders, afforded absolutely no cover for a regiment. Beyond the defile the walls became less precipitous, and it was here that the enemy were ensconced. Hillyard made a clear mental picture of the position, then he turned to the men.

"Let's cut back as quick as possible," he said, and they hurried back to camp, taking Gopal with them.

Hillyard told Colonel Marwood the startling news; the men told the regiment.

The colonel was a patriotic officer, but a trifle phlegmatic. All sentiment—termed by him claptrap—he loathed.

"Let's be thankful it's no worse," he said to Hillyard. "The little chap's got a chance for his life. Nobody'll be disgraced, for we can't expect a youngster to die for the blast of a bugle."

"Think he's got a chance, sir?" inquired Hillyard, firmly. "It's not like those black demons to let anyone walk out of their clutches; we've only the word of a renegade."

The men, who shrewdly suspected the subject of conversation, eyed the colonel eagerly. They dreaded dishonour, and they looked like hounds in leash. But there was no dread in the face of Private O'Flaherty. Only tears in his eyes.

"It's not av the regiment Oi'm thinkin'," he gulped. "That'll be all right. Oi'm thinking of Jimmy."

The colonel considered for a moment.

"Wonder if we could take 'em front and rear the same time?"

"An unexpected attack from the rear might certainly divert their attention," observed Hillyard.

Gopal was again requisitioned, and after some bullying admitted that he knew of a way round, although it was very difficult. But an almost insuperable objection was now encountered in the deserter's unwillingness to approach his former comrades, even though supported by half a regiment. He could not afford to take risks. Cajolings, threats, even with a revolver, failed to move him; but a compromise was at last effected whereby Gopal was to be released before the attack began.

The rear attack was entrusted to Hillyard, who took half the regiment with him. Gopal had by no means exaggerated the roughness of the way, and progress seemed lamentably slow.

"We must get there before——" began Hillyard.

The men understood; the honour of the regiment was in peril, and they redoubled their exertions. Ever and again Hillyard strained his ears for a dreaded bugle-note, but it never came. At last Gopal prayed to be allowed to depart, as another twenty yards would bring them into the midst of the hillmen. The sudden appearance of one of their scouts confirmed this, but O'Flaherty had sprung on him before he could unsling his rifle to give the alarm.

Meanwhile Colonel Marwood had proceeded down the valley, and halted his men just outside the defile. A few shots were fired at them, but there was nothing to do but wait for that rear attack of Hillyard's.

Would it never come?

"If Jimmy's put in that defile, and blows the retreat before Hillyard gets round," said one officer to another, "our plan's spoiled, for nothing will keep the men back then."

A sudden hush fell on the whole body.

At the opposite end of the defile appeared a small figure.

Jimmy!

The men's hearts were in their throats; they gripped their rifles almost convulsively. O'Flaherty alone seemed comparatively calm.

Jimmy had been made aware of his "chance" only a minute before he stepped into the defile, and saw those hundreds of barrels directed at him. He had turned very pale when he heard, and Gunga had rejoiced; the humiliation of his hated masters was assured when their honour was in the keeping of such a frail creature as this.

Jimmy saw his regiment at the other end of the defile. His brain swam as he endeavoured to realise that at last the honour of the regiment was in his hands. And his alone.

The figures all grew blurred. He wanted to live, and now that the moment had come he felt afraid of that mysterious thing—death. Did bullets hurt much, he wondered? It was all very well to laugh at them—when they missed. He had never been hit yet.

Yes, he must blow the retreat; it would not count for much, for he was only a boy after all.

Then he saw in imagination the half-contemptuous toleration with which the men would regard him; him who had talked so bravely of —Ours. He seemed to feel Hillyard, his hero, patting him on the head, and saying, "Never mind, Jimmy!" none of them wholly despising him, for after all he was only a boy.

All of this passed through his mind during the few seconds that he stood in the defile. Then he heard a husky voice, the voice of Gunga Ram the renegade, say "Go!"

To blow the retreat at the command of a renegade, a deserter!

He took two steps forward, and distinctly saw the sunlight glance off the barrels as they were shifted to keep him covered. Gunga Ram leaned forward in his eagerness, and exposed rather more of his person than was quite prudent, seeing that a certain marksman named O'Flaherty was within two hundred yards of him.

With trembling fingers Jimmy pressed the bugle to his lips.

The regiment saw the action, and almost groaned under the tension of suspense.

O'Flaherty was taking steady aim at a fellow who was almost wholly exposing himself, but he did not pull.

Ta-ra-ra—ta-ta! Ta-ra-ra—ta-ta!—rang in their ears. Not the retreat, but the inspiring notes of the charge!

O'Flaherty pulled, and Gunga Ram came toppling over almost upon the head of the brave bugler.

The infuriated hillmen raised their rifles to blow the bugler from the earth, when a tremendous detonation of musketry in their rear convinced them of the wisdom of reserving their fire for this more substantial enemy.

Ta-ra-ra-ra-ra! rang out again.

"Fix bayonets! There's your signal, boys!" almost screamed phlegmatic Colonel Marwood, and with a rousing cheer the men dashed across those hundred and fifty yards.

Almost in a dream Jimmy had sounded the charge. He knew that he ought to be dead by right, as that terrific discharge behind him could only have come from his captors. Then it struck him that as he was still alive he might as well try to keep so, and with a dash Jimmy soon found himself safely behind a boulder.

Taken front and rear the hillmen fled helter-skelter; but they left quite half their number behind them, including Gunga Ram.

A bugle-blast rang out clear and shrill. The regiment looked towards the sound.

There was the gentleman who had saved its honour blowing the "Cease fire!" in his most matter-of-fact manner.

FIRST VISITOR TO LONDON: "Er—is this the way to the Hotel Cecil?"
SECOND DITTO DITTO: "Dunno; but my name ain't Cecil."

THE LOST EXPLORER

A THRILLING TALE OF ADVENTURE IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH.

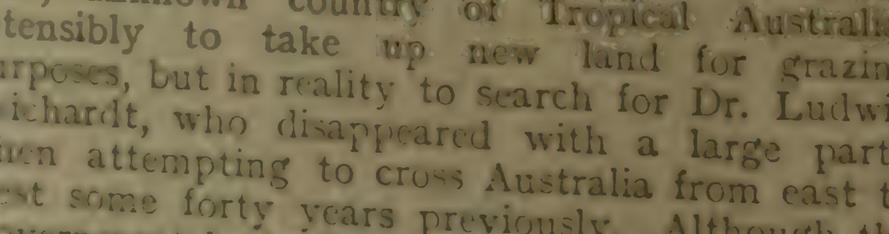
By John Mackie

Author of "The Heart of the Prairie," "The Rising of the Red Man," "Black Man's Rock," "In Search of Smith," etc., etc.

Illustrated by John de Walton

For New Readers

ERIC JARDINE, the hero and narrator of the tale, has accompanied his uncle, Dick Jardine, into the wild, unknown country of Tropical Australia, ostensibly to take up new land for grazing purposes, but in reality to search for Dr. Ludwig Leichardt, who disappeared with a large party when attempting to cross Australia from east to west some forty years previously. Although the Government had offered thousands of pounds to anyone who would clear up the mystery of his fate, no traces of the vanished party had ever come to light. Under the protection of Eric's party is a little native, Nick, whom the savages are very anxious to recover. Nick, however, pleads not to be given back to them. The party falls into an ambush prepared by a cunning and powerful savage named Possum, and Eric Jardine and his friend Maskey are captured and taken to the blacks' encampment, an enormous natural bowl in a well-concealed valley. Maskey and Eric make their escape, but after an exciting chase over a plateau and down a perilous descent, they are brought to bay with their backs to a rock and a semicircle of savages closing in upon them. In the nick of time, however, Jardine and Hume ride up to the rescue.



CHAPTER XXIV

THE TABLES TURNED

IT would have been easy for us to have punished those blacks severely when we had them in that pool, but I remembered that they had spared our lives when it would have been easy for them to have effectually put us out of the way without leaving a trace behind. I reminded my uncle of this in as few words as possible.

"Right you are, Eric," responded Dick Jardine, with, I thought, pleased acquiescence. "One doesn't want to show a side to these niggers that may be mistaken for weakness; but it should be taken into account that they spared your lives. For that, and for the sake of the others who may fall into their hands, we'll show that we, too, can be merciful."

"Collar one of them," observed Maskey, "and give him a talking to. He'll tell the others."

"That's good advice, Maskey," said my uncle; "but first catch your hare, and then cook it. How are we to collar one? Just look at that pool—wouldn't you think there wasn't a living thing in it?"

"Just look under that ledge on the other side," observed the usually silent Hume, who had been quietly standing near the water's edge watching the long pool closely.

We looked, and saw, just where the water lapped the rock in the shadow, and some thirty yards distant, a series of slight disturbances. They might have been caused by small fishes gently coming up to the surface to breathe. But they were the lips of blacks, and they disappeared again noiselessly as soon as they had taken in a supply of air.

My uncle now caught sight of the black who had managed to stay himself just on the brink of the chute, and who was trying to escape

detection by flattening himself against a dark outcrop of rock and remaining perfectly still. His black body blended with the dark rock, of which he seemed a part. A casual observer would have passed him over, but my uncle knew the tricks of the wily savage.

"Ho, you there!" he cried. "Do you think that a white man does not know the difference between a black fellow and a rock? Get up and speak with us, and I promise no evil shall befall you."

Slowly, and with a sheepish manner that betrayed not a little apprehension, the black fellow raised himself. He tried to appear at his ease, but the effort was not exactly a success. He had to move very gingerly indeed, lest he should drop off into the water. He sat hunched up on the extreme edge of the rock with his hands clasped round his knees. Dick Jardine noted that he shot a speculative glance at the pool beneath.

"You can jump in after I have spoken," resumed my uncle. "But you evidently remember me, and there is something about you I seem to recollect. Was it when the big queen spoke to me on the terrace many moons ago, away to the south?"

"That was the time, Big Voice," replied the black, readily. "You remember what the Big One said about the shell in your throat, and your magnificent beard that would be good to weave into nets to catch fishes in the pools."

"Yes, yes, you flatter me," broke in Dick Jardine. "But what I wanted to say was this: You must tell your people—some of whom are now in the pool playing at being fishes—that because they have not killed my two friends, I will overlook their daring to attack us this time. But should they molest or hinder us in any way whatever again, we will unloose our make-thunders, and there will be none of them left to mourn the others. Tell your people we desire to be on friendly terms with them, and that if they desire to avoid being driven far into the desert lands that stretch away unto the south, where only stray kites hover over the sandy wastes, they must deliver unto us the old white man whom you have kept for many long years a prisoner, and who, I am sure, would fain return to his own people before he dies. And now, if you jump from that perch, and come over to this side, we shall give you a present for the Big Queen, and one for yourself. We promise no harm shall come to you."

Whether it was that my uncle's words had a reassuring effect on the savage, or because the latter felt himself unable to stick to that crumbling perch any longer, it is difficult to say. This is certain, his cramped limbs began to shake, and he flung himself awkwardly from the ledge. He struck the water with a great spiash, and disappeared.

The savage was evidently glad to make for the side. With obvious effort he reached the ledge. Maskey stooped and caught the hand he shot to the surface. In another minute we had dragged him ashore.

In a minute or two the black had regained his breath, and though evidently desirous of appearing at his ease, it was fairly certain he was only there by the force of circumstances. Dick Jardine gave him some fish-hooks, which he regarded delightedly. They were a marvellous improvement upon the large and uncertain ones made with infinite labour by his own people. After a critical examination he rolled them up again, and for safe-keeping carefully stuck them into the curious head-dress he wore. From his left ear he withdrew a tiny plug of some dark substance, and handed it to Dick Jardine.

"Pitcherie," explained my uncle. "It is a root they chew, and which acts as a narcotic. Luckily its distribution is extremely limited. With these Yuculas it is used as an article of barter."

"But he took it out of his ear, uncle," I said, somewhat puzzled.

"Yes, and jolly nice, capacious ears, too—hold quite a lot," explained Dick Jardine. And, noting the dawning disgust in my face, "And jolly convenient, too, when you don't happen to have trouser-pockets. The niggers carry all sorts of things in their great mats of hair and in their ears."

Dick Jardine handed the proffered refreshment back to the savage with thanks, explaining that he barred luxuries. He went to his wallets, and taking from them a gaudily coloured pocket-handkerchief, wound it turban-wise round the head of the savage, who grinned with undisguised admiration as he leaned over the ledge and saw himself in the now limpid surface of the pool.

"You'll be quite a big pot when you go back to the tribe," remarked my uncle. "But you'll have to look out lest some of the envious spirits kill you to gain possession of it. Now, my good fellow, I want to ask you a few questions regarding the old white man whom your people keep a prisoner in the land that lies away to the south. If you want to keep in good health I'd advise you to speak the truth."

CHAPTER XXV

NEWS OF LEICHARDT

"WHAT is your name?" asked my uncle, placing one hand in a friendly fashion on the shoulder of the prisoner.

"Wombat, O big one of the voice and beard."

"The sort of bat that doesn't fly," hastily

explained Dick Jardine. "Now tell me, O Wombat, where is the old white man whom your people—more moons ago than you can remember—found by the banks of that great river which flows southward into the Never-Never-Land, until it breaks up into many more rivers, which in turn disappear utterly in the desert sands of the land that lies beyond?"

"Ah, I thought so!" said the savage. "You speak of Wah-to-mah—the man who looks at things—the greybeard who talks with the stars, and tells of big-smokes on the edge of the great waters salt to the taste, and which never dry up like the great fresh-water plains that lie far to the south. That old white man when last I saw him was sick nigh unto his departure into the land of bunyips whose kingdom is the dark night when the living sleep. He is now on that great flat-topped mountain with sides which go straight up and down, and which lies away towards the unknown, many sleeps from here." He pointed with one hand to the south.

"That's plain enough," remarked Dick Jardine. "The big smokes he refers to are the coast towns. The fresh-water plains are the great inland lakes that are formed every seven years or so, when the floods occur. The flat-topped mountain he speaks about must be the one in the desert away to the south—where I saw Dr. Leichardt, and interviewed that big woman, the queen. But what he says about that old white man, as he calls Dr. Leichardt, is rather upsetting. I can only hope we are not too late to rescue him."

My uncle asked the black fellow many questions regarding the old white man, but it was little he could tell. He said that the generation which had seen the coming of the white man amongst them had almost entirely passed away, and that as he, representing the younger generation, had always been accustomed to the captive, and his odd ways amongst them, he had taken little interest in his personality, beyond that of any other patriarch of the tribe. Still, the bunyips that possessed the old man were not altogether evil, for he had been able to make whole again the bones that had been broken, and by his knowledge of the herbs, roots, and berries that grew in the bush, he had frequently been able to snatch back sick ones from the gates of the great Beyond, and restore them to health and strength again.

"Ah, I see!" commented Dick Jardine, when the black fellow paused in his enumeration of the many useful qualities which the old white captive had possessed. "I can understand now why the savages were so anxious to keep this old white man with them. All he has said points to the fact that the white man possessed much medical and surgical skill. His references to star-gazing refer to Leichardt's knowledge of astronomy, and, of course, Leichardt was a naturalist, and a doctor as well."

He turned to the black man.

"And now," said my uncle, "we are going to give you some things which are good to eat, and presents besides. You will give some to your queen, and a little packet I shall entrust you with you will give into the hands of the old white man himself. Come, Wombat, you have nothing to fear. We are going to our camp, and before the sun is straight overhead you will be returning to your people again."

We did not trouble any more about the blacks who were in the pool. Accompanied by Wombat, who now seemed reassured, we struck off through the bush to where my uncle had his camp. The latter explained it was at no great distance, and close to the creek. When they had so opportunely come upon us they had been skirting the mountain looking for tracks. Nick, otherwise known as Bandicoot, had declared to some of the party that the mountain was "hollow in the inside," and that at a certain point a tributary of the creek issued from it, constituting the entrance. As, however, this entrance was completely concealed by the dense vegetation, and had been missed, Nick's information was put down as mistaken. Moreover, they doubted if ever he had been so far north with the tribe. Owing to the blacks who had captured Maskey and me having waded in the bed of the stream, we had left no tracks behind us.

"Well, Eric, you gave us all quite a turn," said my uncle, as I stepped out briskly alongside his horse. "We couldn't make out for the life of us what had happened to you. We tracked you to the creek, and we saw where some of the blacks had emerged on the other side, and though we followed right up stream for miles we could find no traces of you. Curiously enough, last night when there was a breath of wind we thought we heard the sound as of distant voices chanting, and the beating of native drums; but where those mysterious sounds came from we could not for the life of us determine."

"You didn't think that Nick might be right, and that the mountain was only a circular ridge, after all?" I said.

"Well, when you see a precipitous, flat-topped mountain without a break in it, it doesn't occur to one that it is only a circular shell of rock enclosing a valley with a stream running through it."

"And, as you missed the tributary, you concluded Nick must have been mistaken."

"Of course. What other conclusion could we come to? Still, the little chap was so positive that to-day we intended taking him with

us, and going back over the same ground. I had begun to think that undergrowth might just possibly hide some opening."

"Nick was right," I said. "By wading in the stream after emerging from that screen of leaves, of course, all tracks are lost. Once known, however, and there can be no particular difficulty in entering the valley. It was the getting out that troubled Maskey and me."

In less than half an hour we arrived at the camp, and glad indeed were Maskey and I to be there.

"You want a jolly good drink of tea, and some civilised food, I suppose," observed Dick Jardine. "But first we'll give our friend Wombat a few trifles, and send him back to his friends. As soon as we have had something to eat we'll make tracks, too. We're rather too close to those blacks for my fancy."

After Wombat had pretended to eat—he was strangely suspicious of our foodstuffs—we packed him off, rejoicing in the possession of various presents consisting of red calico, beads, and hand-glasses of trifling cost to us, but doubtless of quite a fanciful value to the blacks of the interior, who have little or no communication with the outside world. My uncle warned Wombat regarding Possum, the traitor in their midst, telling him that they, the blacks, would be consulting their own interests if they gave that gentleman his walking ticket at the earliest opportunity.

"Now," said my uncle, after we had enjoyed a much-needed meal and felt like our old selves again. "I think the best thing we can do is to start off at once, and put as many miles between ourselves and the tribe as we can manage before sundown."

Within two hours we had lost sight of the mountain, and were making good progress over the lightly timbered plain. About five o'clock in the afternoon we halted, unyoked, and had tea by a beautiful lagoon.

The Southern Cross was gleaming in the blue vault of the heavens, and other constellations hardly less brilliant were showing in their appointed places when my uncle cried:—

"Time to hitch up and get under way, comrades. I wonder what is exciting the interest of those dingoes?"

My uncle stood listening for a moment with his head on one side. From two or three different points of the compass, and at a distance of some three or four hundred yards, came a mournful and spasmodic wailing, as eerie a sound as any in the Australian bush, and which proclaimed that the nocturnal pariah of the woods had begun his nightly prowl.

"That no dingo," observed Nick, with an assumption of superior knowledge, and just a suspicion of contempt. "That one black fellow. Him look out yaraman hosses."

"Well, I can't say that I distinguish human notes in these sounds," said Dick Jardine, quietly, "but I know that those blacks are the cleverest mimics on earth, and I've more than once heard them signalling to one another in that fashion when they meditated an attack. Eric, you and I will go on ahead, and the others will keep close to the wagon with their rifles, in case of attack. Let the dogs nose around."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ATTACK BY MOONLIGHT

THE air was comparatively fresh and cool, and we had made good time. We must have put nearly twenty miles between the blacks and ourselves since we started out, and it seemed as if those gentry had wisely determined to let us slip away in peace and unmolested. They knew we were armed with the death-dealing "make-thunders," so why should they invite trouble, more particularly as we had shown ourselves merciful when we had some of them at our mercy in the pool? At least that was the view I took of the situation, and which I expressed to my uncle as we rode abreast.

"I wish I could believe as much, Eric," said Dick Jardine. "My experience in dealing with savages is that you can never be sure of where you stand with them."

"But we left them alone when they were in that pool," I argued, "and that fellow Wombat would give them your message."

"And what about that chap who nearly came to grief on the ledge? And those other fellows on whom we turned the tables? And then you forget their injured pride when they think of how you gave them the slip."

"And there is that chap Possum," I added, as my uncle's words went home, and other reasons militating against a possibility of conciliation suggested themselves.

"Yes, that's another argument, and a powerful one that will stand on its own merits. If we succeed in taking back young Nick to his people, then Possum's little schemes will be badly upset. You see, they've found him out plotting before, and given him a chance of redeeming his character, but when that big black queen discovers that the nimble Possum has been running with the hare and hunting with the hounds, he'll be in a precious tight fix. I'd give something to be a spectator when she squares her little account with him."

I remembered how the big black queen had administered corporal punishment to the self-satisfied and scheming Prime Minister with a club in the presence of the crowd when Dick Jardine had interviewed her, and I admit the

prospect of witnessing such another heartening spectacle appealed to me. Still, desperate as was Possum's case, I hardly thought he would risk coming in contact with us again to avert the wrath of the queen.

"Uncle," I said, "if this big woman, the queen, is Possum's principal enemy, why doesn't he try to quieten or remove her? Surely a man, and a cunning and desperate villain at that, need fear no woman."

"When you see her I fancy you'll hardly ask yourself such a question," replied my uncle, quietly. "But it is just possible that if Possum finds he can't get Nick out of our hands, or induce his friends in the tribe to wipe us out, he'll try to 'remove' her, as you happily put it. I wouldn't like to be him if he tries it and fails. In the meantime, we must keep an eye on Nick, and not allow him out of our sight. Hello, what's the matter back there?"

Dick Jardine and I had ridden somewhat ahead of the wagon perhaps 150yds. or so, and were proceeding at a quick walk through a species of natural avenue with low bushes to the right and left of us when a peculiar rattling sound, and the hoarse shouts of men arose. Two rifle shots rang out in quick succession.

"Quick, Eric, back to the wagons. They're attacking us!" cried my uncle, and wheeled his horse where it stood.

Lucky it was we did so at that moment, for from behind the low bushes there came a flight of spears, clubs, and boomerangs. My horse was struck on the neck by one of the latter, which considerably accelerated his movements to the rear, and if I had not bent low over the saddle at the first hint of danger I would probably have got a spear through my body. How Dick Jardine fared I could not tell in the excitement of the moment.

It was a short but desperate encounter. The blacks, led by our arch enemy Possum, had ambushed the wagon and made a desperate attack on it. Possum doubtless knew that Nick would be riding on top, and had therefore caused a shower of spears and other weapons to be directed at it. If any human being was resting on the load it was difficult to see how he could escape death. Spears stuck from the tarpaulin and such of the load as was exposed—principally bags of flour and mats of sugar and rice, and rolls of bedding—till it reminded one of a giant porcupine. We knew Nick had been slumbering there, and our hearts sank. Still we were all in imminent peril, and unless we wanted to be wiped out we would have to fight for dear life.

"Into the bush, and charge them, boys," cried Dick Jardine.

Digging his heels into his horse's flanks he rode his powerful roan right at a broad, low screen of bushes behind which skulked black and shadowy figures.

Bang, bang, bang! And using his short repeating rifle as another man might a revolver, my uncle was amongst the savages in less time than it takes to tell it, bowling them over right and left. The others by this time were attacking the converging blacks in a similar fashion. Still, the savages were committed to a desperate attempt to wipe us out, and knew it would be safer for them to press their attack home than to allow themselves to be thus early intimidated and annihilated in flight.

It was a fortunate thing for us, as we afterwards realised, that the blacks had concentrated their attack upon the wagon and those of the party who were escorting it. Had they only speared the horses in the team it would have been an irretrievable blow to us. They doubtless thought they could deal with them after they had slain us. But the situation was perilous, and pressing to a degree. The savages were rallying, and pressing home the attack.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE REAPPEARANCE OF POSSUM

HOW it exactly happened is plain enough to me now, though at the time it puzzled me to determine how the villainous black fellow who caught my horse by the tail with one hand and tried to spear me with the other managed it.

With my reins in my left hand and my carbine in my right, I had fired point-blank into a low screen of bushes, above and behind which I caught a glimpse of active black figures with shaggy mops of hair. They were throwing spears and clubs at us with fierce energy. There were women with them, who, according to the custom of the savages, carried armfuls of the necessary weapons for their lords and masters. With shrill cries and shouts of encouragement they urged the warriors on. I had ridden close up to a bush and brought down a black fellow who was in the act of throwing a spear at me; when suddenly my horse began to kick and plunge in a most alarming fashion. It then began to wheel round in a circle. It took me all my time to keep my seat in the saddle. I was at a loss to account for the gyrating process. It soon, however, became apparent.

A lithe savage had caught my horse by the tail, and being unable or unwilling to let go again, was being whirled round like a ball at the end of a string. My horse showed remarkable intelligence in adopting the tactics by which it strove to get rid of him, although it did not consider my comfort or safety in the matter. Still, I was a fair horseman, and looking

A savage caught my horse by the tail, and the animal began to wheel rapidly round in a circle. It took me all my time to keep in the saddle, while the black was whirled round and round like a ball at the end of a string.

over my left shoulder I espied the cause of my dilemma. There was a surprised and half-scared grin on the face of the black that under different circumstances would have been entertaining. As it was it was impossible for me to get at him. He was switched round so quickly that I only got the barest glimpse of him. Suddenly my horse moved somewhat more slowly. Quick as thought the savage released his spear-hand from my horse's tail, and, with a promptness which did him infinite credit, levelled it full at me. I seemed utterly at his mercy. Automatically, however, my heel was dug into the near flank of my horse, and with a sudden access of energy Barney wheeled again. This time the savage had calculated without his host. A straight-limbed tree was in the way, and against this he was dashed with a force that I thought must have killed him. Next moment the hapless one fell to the earth, a limp and apparently lifeless mass.

But that was only an incident in the struggle. The blacks were evidently determined to fight to a finish. With a courage and daring unusual amongst those savages, they surrounded and kept rushing in upon us. Still, owing to the uncertain light, and the quick movements of the horsemen, most of their spears and waddies missed their marks. Hume and Maskey were performing feats of valour. When I was engaged pushing some more cartridges into the magazine of my Winchester I saw the latter having an exciting time with a powerful, thick-set savage whom I thought I recognised.

Maskey, having fired the last shot in the magazine of his rifle, had paused to recharge again when his assailant made a rush at him with an upraised club. Fortunately at that moment the stockman's horse moved, and the waddy crashed down on the pommel of the saddle. The savage had come so close to Maskey that the latter shot out his right hand and gripped his attacker by his shaggy mop of hair. The savage pulled one way and Maskey and the horse pulled another. Somebody or something had to give. Next moment the stockman's saddle began to turn. But Maskey still held on.

"Stick to him, Maskey!" I heard Dick Jardine cry, himself too much engaged to go to his aid.

Maskey stuck to him, with the result that the saddle turned suddenly, and the stockman came to earth with a flop. He, however, had held on to the savage's shaggy mop of hair, and that doubtless broke his fall very considerably. Before Maskey could recover himself, Possum, for he it was, had managed to wrench his snaky locks from his adversary's grasp, and was on his legs again. I made a dash at him, but Hume was before me.

That individual's horse had been speared, and, jumping from the saddle, he had proceeded to fight on foot. He had fired the last cartridge in his rifle when he espied Maskey's dilemma and Possum in the act of springing to his feet. Clubbing his Winchester, Hume raised it in the air, and aimed a furious blow at the black fellow's head. Possum ducked, and the butt of the weapon, striking the bole of a tree, smashed like a child's toy. To complete his discomfiture, Hume lost his footing, and fell headlong. He was, however, up again in a moment.

I would have rushed to his assistance, only what followed happened too quickly to permit of interference. Anyhow, it is more than likely I would only have been in the way and hampered the movements of my comrade.

Possum, ducking his head, rushed in upon Hume, and proceeded to butt him. But the Scotsman was evidently an old hand. Getting the astonished black fellow's head in chancery he proceeded to pummel him in a style I sincerely hope it may never be my lot to experience. So terrible was the punishment the wily Possum received, and such agonised groans and cries escaped from him, that the other combatants actually suspended hostilities to look on. Possum struggled furiously, but Hume's brawny left arm encircled the Prime Minister's thick neck, while his right arm described an unflagging and determined half-circle. It reminded one of a piece of machinery. The stockman's horny fist must have rendered Possum's countenance unrecognisable for many a long day afterwards, if indeed it did not considerably alter his already sufficiently villainous features.

"Tak' that, and that, and that!" cried Hume, gasping for breath.

It must have been the frenzy of desperation that enabled the hapless Possum to develop a sudden access of strength and energy. He succeeded in pushing Hume backwards. The latter's heels caught in the ground, with the result that he fell prone on his back. In order to save himself he released Possum's head, putting out his hands on either side. Next moment the nimble savage had kicked down on his prostrate adversary, and with a spring was making off into the bush. But Maskey barred the way. Down went the head of the savage again, and next moment the stockman was lying on the ground, gasping for breath. Dick Jardine took a flying shot at Possum, but only succeeded in bowling over a tall black fellow who seemed to be leading the attack, and who had been beguiled into a temporary state of unguardedness.

This was the all-important moment of the fight. With Maskey and Hume practically knocked out by the clever Possum the savages should have seen and seized their opportunity. The fight was practically theirs, but Dick Jardine did not give them time to seize their advantage.

With a wild hurrah he proceeded to charge the scattered blacks.

"Give it them, Eric!" he shouted. "Hurrah, hurrah!"

Whether it was the mighty and startling volume of my uncle's voice, or the fact that he and I charged the enemy with redoubled vigour, that turned the scales in our favour, it is difficult to say. This, however, is certain: the blacks were left no time to realise and turn to account their temporary advantage. Our timely fusillade, which a minute or two later might have ranked as a forlorn hope, surprised and discomfited the enemy, and in a moment turned defeat into victory. They hesitated, turned, and ran.

"Hurrah, hurrah! Yell, Eric, yell for all you are worth!" cried Dick Jardine, at the same time firing quickly at the retreating enemy. I followed his example. Hume and Maskey staggered to their feet. Dick Jardine and I kept up a sharp fire on the disappearing blacks. In a minute or two we were left in the possession of the field.

"Let's send up a rocket," cried Dick Jardine, running to the wagon. "They'll think it is our Devil-Devil, as they call him. It will scare them more than anything."

In two minutes we had fired a great rocket that rushed up into the heavens with an unearthly screech. It burst high in the air with a hollow boom that must have been heard miles away. A glorious tail of fire marked its comet-like course. Then there descended a shower of blood-red lights, which changed into falling stars of brightest electric blue ere they finally went out altogether. Accompanying this magnificent display was a series of pistol-like shots which must have struck terror into the hearts of the sorely astonished and fleeing blacks.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AFTER THE FIGHT

We found that Nick had hidden in the load on the wagon, and was all right, so we resumed our journey again, keeping a sharp look-out and as much to the open as possible. We saw no further signs of the blacks, but we were none the less vigilant. It was exceedingly unlikely, however, that they would again attack us that night, having failed in their attempts to surprise us, and having sustained such a disastrous reverse. It was now past midnight, and overhead we could see that the Southern Cross had wheeled in the sky.

Six miles or more, and we came to the high open banks of a beautiful creek. In the pale moonlight it was a beautiful and peaceful spot. On three sides of us the banks fell away precipitously. We could, with one man acting as sentry and herd, keep our horses in that little peninsula without fear of them straying or being attacked. Moreover, there was fine grass and plenty of it everywhere.

We pulled the wagon on to a bare place, turned out the horses, and lit a fire. Within ten minutes we had steaming pannikins of tea, and were sitting round the cheerful blaze. One of the men had mounted guard at the neck of the peninsula. We felt as safe here as in some castellated building. My uncle and the others had a pipe. Half an hour later, when I had unrolled my blankets and turned in, I felt as comfortable and secure as if in my own bed at home. Moreover, I was fairly tired, and felt decidedly drowsy. Within a few minutes I must have been sound asleep. When I awoke I heard the voice of Maskey announcing that breakfast was ready.

"If you make down that gap you can have a dip in the clearest pool in the world," said my uncle. "Some of the others are down there now. But hurry up."

I had that dip in the coldest and clearest of pools, and within the next few days I had good reason to remember it longingly.

In the clear sunlight, and with the cheerful bustle of preparation for a long, dry stage all around me, it was difficult to realise that the grim fight of the preceding night was other than an ugly dream.

"We must fill the cask and any available water-bottle when we get to the river," said my uncle to the men, when we had cleared the plates and pannikins away, and were ready to start out again. "You see, we'll have to make at least two stages without water. We'll go ahead now. I'll lead the way. Remember all to go easy on your water-bottles. I needn't tell you to let your horses drink their fill at the river."

We descended by the gap into the beautiful tree-clad valley, and successfully negotiated the crossing. Ten minutes later we stood on the edge of the grey desert—that wild waste of sand and hard-baked clay. There was apparently nothing to guide us or to steer by, save that sense called "locality," which my uncle possessed to a degree rivalling that of the hunting savage.

"That's our direction. Now go easily, men!" And pointing with his short riding cane in a southerly direction my uncle took the lead.

In ten minutes we were on as featureless and monotonous a plain as it has ever been my lot to look upon. No life of any kind here—not a leaf nor even a blade of grass. Neither the chirrup of bird nor carol of grasshopper broke the brooding silence. It was a weary land, without a shadow, and as silent as the grave.

We rode into the desert, and it swallowed us up. We might have been travelling on the

surface of a dead planet for all the life we met with. Here and there perhaps truculent spikes of spinifex grass crowned the ridges, but no cricket chortled in that shadeless wilderness, and no kite or other bird of prey wheeled in the pale blue of the heavens. How could anything exist in that grey furnace of sand? Why should anything want to live in such a ghastly wilderness?

I shall never forget our journey across the desert as long as I live. We had an accident with our water-barrel, and the wells at the oasis having completely dried up, the tortures we endured were terrible. As if it was not torture enough to witness that of our dumb friends the horses! We had to leave some of them behind even within sight of the ridge that meant hope and life. Forty-eight hours after the start we crossed that desert and struck the native wells. With beating and anxious hearts we watched my uncle descend the sloping sand in the moonlight. There might not be water after all!

"The water is all right," said Dick Jardine, as, dipping his pannikin into it, he poured some into the air between himself and the moonlight. "I fancy the blacks must have been here quite lately, but I'm not taking chances. I don't want to risk hydatids."

I chafed over the delay, and what seemed to me the unnecessary precautions of my uncle. I was tortured by thirst, and had I been alone would have drank that water unhesitatingly without looking in it to see if it contained anything of a contaminating nature. But Dick Jardine was an old hand. He lit a match, and, holding it over the surface of the pool, took a good look round..

"It's all right, I think, Eric. Have a drink."

He scooped a hole in the sand close to the edge so that the water percolated through it first before going into the pannikin. Then he handed it to me. My uncle always thought of others first.

I seized it, and drank greedily. Then my uncle took a drink, but did not gulp it down as I had done.

"Now, Eric, enough for the present. Let's back to the others. We must halt some little distance from these wells. Otherwise the horses will rush into them, and break them down."

I was longing for another drink, and said as much, but my uncle was adamant.

"A pint is as much as is good for you at the present moment, Eric," he said, gently. "More would only make you ill. We'll have a rare old billy of tea later on. I'd like to give these poor horses a drink, but we'll have to get a bucket from the wagon first. Come, let's get back to them." With a glorious access of hope and energy we made back in the direction of the team.

In a few minutes more we had stopped the team close to the water-course. We had some considerable difficulty in restraining the horses. They seemed to instinctively know there was water ahead, and made frantic endeavours to push on. But the men and black boys rounded them up. Dick Jardine lost no time in directing matters.

Twenty minutes later and all the horses had been watered. Meanwhile we had taken certain groceries out of a hundred-gallon tank, in which they had been placed to preserve them, and filled it with water. We took the load off the wagon, and put the water on instead. A few minutes later Hume, a black boy, and myself started back the way we had come to pick up the horses that had been left behind.

We found some of the poor animals, somewhat refreshed by the comparative coolness of the night, following upon our tracks painfully. A bucket of water apiece had a magical effect. They picked up strength and spirit immediately, and, undriven, followed the wagon-tracks.

The next day was Sunday, and my uncle said that we were to do no work but that which was absolutely necessary. It was a pleasant experience to have one's breakfast comfortably, and to know that we had the entire day to attend to those details that we had been obliged to neglect during the week. It is true that we had to wash our dirty clothes, but that did not take long, and the hot sun dried them in no time; and cleanliness, as everyone knows—especially in the tropics—is of vital importance. At our midday meal we had plum-duff, and one or two delicacies from our store of tinned goods. We had rigged the tarpaulin at the tail-end of the wagon, and in its shade we sat with a feeling of great content. Some of us read, and some of us sewed on buttons and mended clothes that wanted mending very badly indeed. As for the horses, they showed no disposition to stray. They stuck to the low flat that bordered the creek, and fed on the rich grasses in the shadow of the high banks. It was a welcome respite from our stern and arduous week-day life.

In the afternoon Dick Jardine told me to take my rifle in case of meeting with blacks, and come and have a stroll with him. As usual he carried field-glasses slung over his back.

"We'll walk down the banks of the creek for a mile or two, and then ascend that high part of the ridge," he said. "It's only two or three hundred feet in height, but we'll be able to have a good look round, and determine on our route for to-morrow. Keep your eyes about you till we return, men. You can see for yourselves that lots of blacks occasionally travel up and down this creek, and if there are any in the neighbourhood now they may take a fancy to the horses."

CHAPTER XXIX

WE APPROACH OUR GOAL

MY uncle and I started off in a southerly direction. At first we stuck to the banks of the creek, which seemed to run parallel with the ridge. The latter seemed of iron-stone formation, though here and there were wall-like outcrops of quartz-bearing rock called by miners "elfin-dyke." The ridge was very rough and rocky, with here and there stunted gums, bauhania, and wattles cropping up. We saw quite a few kangaroos and rock wallabies, but did not interfere with them. We were not out for sport.

It was the creek itself that interested us most. Though dry as the bed of an extinct volcano, it exhibited eloquent signs of great and furious floods. The banks and bed of the miniature ravine were scoured and worn in a fashion that testified to the immense volume and force of the hurrying waters. Indeed, there were signs that the floods at times far over-topped the banks and mounted the ridge itself. That this creek had not been flooded for some years was evident. It was made plain to me by Dick Jardine.

"It's five or six years," he said, "since this creek ran a banker. There would be more *débris* on the banks and lodged in these trees if there had been recent floods. Besides, look at these piles of mussel-shells at varying levels on the banks of that great dry pool. And look at the watermarks themselves. Some of those higher and older heaps, scattered and lichen-grown as they are, must be five or six years old. A flood since that time would have swept them clean away, and not left a trace."

"And these birds' nests!" I said. "And there is a bower-bird's playground that has

In our mad flight from the savages my uncle leapt rocks in a style that astonished me. Further and further behind I was left.

been deserted. It must have taken quite four years to have decorated it like that. I've often watched their ways down south. And it is evident they haven't got the regular wet season here they have in the gulf. We must be in the region of intermittent ones, or cycles."

"Yes," said my uncle, slowly and thoughtfully.

"And, uncle," I persisted, "isn't it almost time now for one of those deluges to recur? They tell me that when they do so these great plains or deserts become inland seas, some of them, indeed, remaining as such for years. We'd be in a nice pickle, wouldn't we, if any such flood were to take place when we were here?"

"Ye-ss," said my uncle again, this time more slowly and more preoccupied. "Well, we can't hold back because of something that is not certain. Still, I intend sticking to high country as much as possible. We've another desert to cross, but there is a slight ridge intersecting part of it that we'll be able to make use of. I've a notion that this creek doesn't run into the interior as most of the others do, but at no great distance from here veers round and runs in an easterly direction. I shouldn't wonder if it were possible by descending this creek to strike the head of the Nicholson River, and descending it, to reach the gulf country again in the neighbourhood of Burketown."

"Even supposing you had boats," I said, "it would be taking big risks to chance it, wouldn't it? It would be quite possible to find ourselves in the centre of Australia before we exactly knew where we were. It would then be a thousand chances to one against us ever making civilisation again."

"I'm not so sure that it hasn't been done," said Dick Jardine, thoughtfully. "Some years ago there was a story about a man who was picked up by some prospectors and brought into a cattle station in South Australia. He was like a living skeleton, and we could never get quite at the truth of the story, for the poor chap had lost his reason. But here we are, opposite the high portion of the ridge. Let's ascend it, and have a look around."

We turned to the rock and began the ascent, and when we reached the top we found that a long, low, and irregular ridge ran south through a khaki-coloured desert, till it was lost in the mysterious horizon of an unknown land. A creek running parallel to it wasted away in the distance like the fag-end of a thread. And all around the "level waste and rounding grey" of a neglected portion of the earth—a place still in the making, without form and void—where the rivers run the wrong way when they run at all, because the forces of nature have not yet completed the rough-cast process. The result, a weird wilderness that baffles the efforts of man to bring it into line with other parts of the world.

And the silence of this unfinished land. It was a silence that appalled one by reason of the magnitude of its domain. It oppressed one as a dumb nightmare might a sleeper struggling to awake and escape from its toils. One wanted to shout to break the spell, to rid oneself of the feeling that one stood all alone on a dead planet where human life was not, and never could be.

I could find nothing to say because of the paralysing influence that landscape exercised. The deadly stillness was broken by the voice of Dick Jardine, and it startled me by reason of its harshness and seeming incongruity.

"Do you see a small grey speck away far over there to the south?" he asked.

I looked and fancied I saw what he referred to. I answered in the affirmative.

"Well, that's the mirage of a knob of rock that lies some twenty miles this side of the flat-topped mountain we are making for. There will be another dry stage when we get to the end of this ridge. But then our goal is in sight. Let's go back to camp. Hello! What's that?"

One, two, three, and four distant rifle shots in quick succession from the direction of our camp.

"It is the blacks who have turned up again, and are attacking the camp!" cried Dick Jardine. "I hope our fellows haven't been caught napping. Come along, Eric!"

We descended that ridge in less than one-fourth of the time we took to go up it. I had always considered myself a fairly good runner, but my uncle disabused me of the notion that day. For such a big man, and, moreover, one who was certainly, in the matter of years at least, well across that plane which is called the prime of life, my uncle was a distinct surprise. After all, perhaps, he was still physically a man in the full vigour of manhood. The strenuous outdoor life which had been his had warded off those ills, and that natural deterioration, which a life of ease and luxury entails.

Dick Jardine squared his shoulders and raced like a professional runner. He jumped rocks and inequalities in the ground in a style that astonished me. His head was thrown back, and his big beard streamed over his broad chest.

"Come on, Eric," he cried. "They're still keeping it up. Let's cut over to that point. It will shorten the way by half."

How I ran! As for Dick Jardine he simply sailed away from me. Two or three times, however, he stopped to encourage and bring me alongside him. He evidently did not believe in leaving me behind to be, perhaps, cut off by stray blacks.

But when the savages caught sight of us they made off, and we found the camp intact. No one had been hurt.

The wheels of the wagon having been greased and seen to, were now adjusted. Preparations were made for an early start next morning. The horses, having had lots of good grass and water, not to speak of a rest, were now thoroughly recovered, and would be quite fit to proceed again. It was difficult to believe they were the same animals that had crawled into camp on the preceding evening. We turned in early, taking the precaution of mounting guard by turns. The night passed peacefully, and without incident.

At half-past three o'clock next morning, while it was yet dark, we were roused by the cook to have an early pannikin of tea, and to prepare for another start. Dawn was breaking when we pulled out of camp, my uncle and I, as usual, taking the lead.

For the next three days we made moderate stages. We always camped where there was fairly good grass and water for the horses. This was sound policy. We kept to the foot of the ridge, and were never at any time very far from the creek, which in places showed that periodically it contained much water, permitting the growth of shell-fish, and, therefore, food for the wandering blacks. We saw no more of our late attackers.

"This is the most southerly end of the ridge," observed my uncle to us as we were having breakfast on the morning of the third day after the fight, "and, as you see, we'll have to part company with the creek now, as it turns sharp round to the east. We ought to sight our goal some time to-morrow. In fact, we can see that knob of rock the mirage helped us to spot on Sunday distinctly from here. Of course, it was then much farther off than it looked. We've another desert to cross, but as we've mended that cask we shan't be so badly off for water."

We made the horses drink their fill, saw to the security of the water, and made a start. The day passed without incident. The heat, as before, was very trying. That night we camped in an oasis in the desert. Next morning we were early astir, for, as Dick Jardine had told us, we ought to pass the pinnacle of rock we had seen some days before, and sight the goal of our hopes — the mountain in the desert where the great long-lost explorer, Dr. Ludwig Leichardt, was kept prisoner by the savages.

(To be continued.)

THE RULE OF THE NATIVE PRINCES IN INDIA

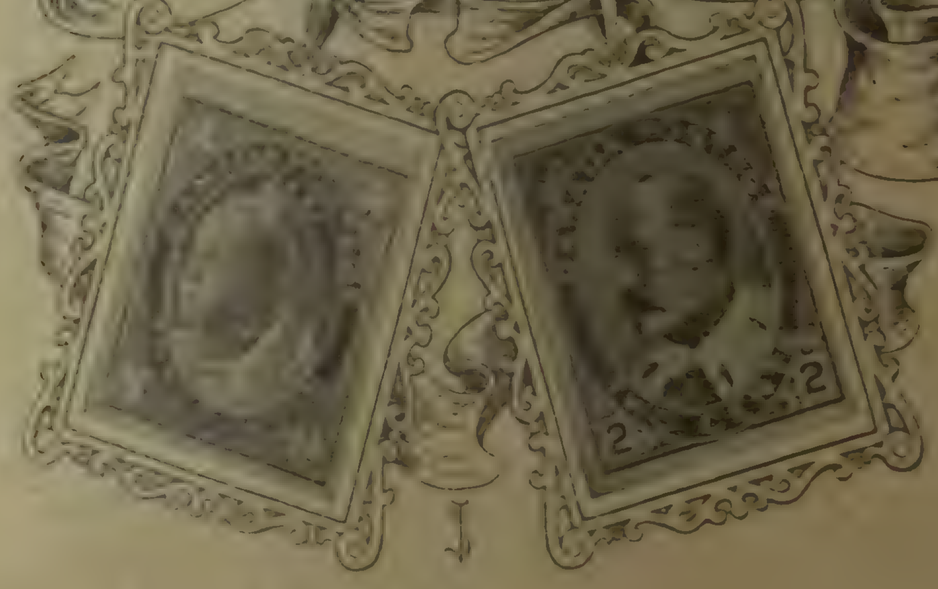
INDIA is governed by the British, but only part of it is governed directly by them. Of the 1,766,642 square miles of India, 690,000 square miles are under the rule of the native princes, as are 66,000,000 out of the 360,000,000 inhabitants. There are some 6,000 native chiefs, big and little, from the Nizam, the ruler of Hyderabad, with its population of 11,000,000, its territory of 82,698 square miles, and its revenues of about £2,400,000, down to a petty chief, with a few square miles of territory, and a thousand or two a year of revenue.

There is as much variety in their breeding, and bearing, and ability as in their territories and revenues. Some of them trace their ancestry straight back to the first conquerors from the north; others are descended from Arab, Tartar, or Afghan invaders; others are the descendants of court favourites, and their ancestral right to rank is as illegitimate as some of the proud names in England and France; while others are heirs of rough soldiers who grabbed what they could and held it when the Mughal Empire went to pieces. Some are highly educated, others ignorant; some are Anglicised, some Parisicised, devoting much time, those to cricket, racing, polo; and these to such European travel as they are permitted, and lazy licentiousness both at home and abroad. There are fine gentlemen among them, as chivalrous and as proud as any noble in Europe, and there are others who are mere naughty schoolboys. There are not a few who spend their money on schools and colleges and museums, on irrigation works and tramways, on roads and bridges and model prisons, and who pride themselves on the efficiency and smartness of their Imperial Service troops; and others who throw thousands about on motor-cars, jewels, dancing-girls, or favourite wives, and hideous Brummagem furniture and pictures. There are burly, heavy-shouldered, big-hipped, gross-featured princes, who look like brown caricatures of some of Rubens's women; and there are lithe, muscular, fine-featured fellows, who look fit for a tussle with a tiger, and show their breeding even to their finger-tips.—PRICE COLLIER, in *Scribner's Magazine*.

THE STAMP COLLECTOR

Edited By

PERCY C. BISHOP



CATALOGUES: "SIMPLIFIED" AND "ADVANCED"

NOWADAYS two kinds of stamp catalogue are published—the "simplified," or beginner's catalogue, which lists only the "standard" varieties of postage stamps; and the "advanced" catalogue, which takes in all known variations of design, paper, watermark, printing, and perforation. The simplified catalogue will give us lists comprising from twenty thousand to twenty-five thousand varieties, according to the compiler's interpretation of the term "standard variety," while the more advanced handbook may contain any number of varieties, from forty thousand upwards, according to the compiler's notion of what constitutes a "collectable variety."

Now which book is the better for the novice?

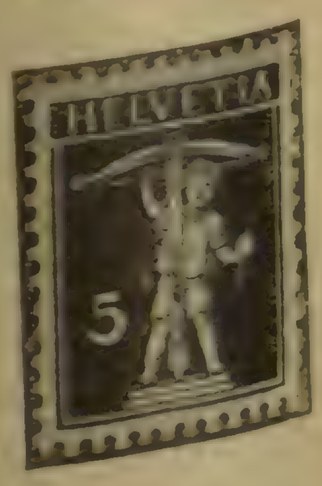
Most people will advise the simplified version—firstly, because it *is* simplified; and, secondly, because it does not oppress the novice with a sense of the difficulties and intricacies that await him in the higher walks of the hobby. Personally, I think very little of this second reason. If a boy, youth, or young man feels any enthusiasm for stamp collecting he will not allow prospective difficulties to scare him—rather will he welcome them as giving zest and relish to the game. But the simplified catalogue does make stamp collecting easy for the beginner, and that is a solid argument in its favour. "Sufficient for the day——" etc. But the simplified catalogue is only the preparatory school of the hobby. It teaches merely stamp collecting—the getting together of so many stamps, each of a distinctly different pattern. For real philately we must pass on to the advanced catalogue, with its errors and shades, its "mixed perfs.," its die and plate varieties, its hundred-and-one variations that are excluded from the simplified lists.

But to pass from the beginner's guide to the full catalogue is a long stride, and it means practically that one has to hark back to the beginning of each country's postage stamp history, and remodel one's collection in the light of fuller knowledge. "A useful education," some people will call this; "a waste of time and effort," others will say; and I am inclined to sympathise with those others.

For a very young and inexperienced collector undoubtedly the beginner's book is best; but if the novice be young only in philatelic knowledge, and not in years, then I advise him to skip the preparatory class and take his place among the grown-ups, with the advanced catalogue as his guide, philosopher, and friend.

Some Recent Swiss Varieties

The stamps of Switzerland of the current designs ("William Tell's son" for the low values, and "figure of Helvetia" for the stamps of 10 centimes and upwards) show a number of interesting varieties, of which perhaps a simple description may be helpful to philatelic Captainites. The 5 centimes, green, with the "William Tell Junior" design, first appeared in 1907, but was the subject of so much hostile criticism that a revised version was produced a year later. This again was technically inaccurate, and a further redrawing was made for the issue of 1910. There was yet a fourth printing last year, showing a difference in the lettering, so that the period 1907–1911 has given us four distinct varieties of the 5 centimes of the William Tell issue. Let me briefly describe them:—



TYPE I. (issue of 1907–8).—Shaped background, numeral "5" in each of the lower corners, word "Francs" at foot.

TYPE II. (issue of 1908–9).—Plain background of solid colour; only one numeral "5," placed to the left of the boy's figure; word "Francs" removed. The cord of the boy's crossbow passes in front of the stock.

TYPE III. (issue of 1910).—In all respects similar to Type II. except that the cord of the crossbow passes behind instead of in front of the stock.

To show more clearly the difference between Types II. and III., I give illustrations of the crossbows shown respectively on the 1908–9 and the 1910 printings.

TYPE IV. (issue of 1911).—Exactly the same as Type III. except for a redrawing of the word "Helvetia" at the head of the stamps, "serifs" being added to the letters.

Another recent Swiss stamp that will repay close inspection by the variety hunter is the 10 centimes (figure of Helvetia seated) of 1908. This design was the work of Mons. C. L'Eplattenier. In the first type this gentleman's name in full was embodied in the design, but in the second printing only the initials "C. L." appeared. To show clearly where one should look for this variety I present enlarged illustrations of the lower left-hand portion of the stamp. Glance at the rock close to the hilt of Helvetia's sword, and there will be little difficulty in deciphering "C. L'Eplattenier" on the one type and "C. L." on the other.

Notable New Issues

Cuba.—The portrait stamps of the February 1910 series, bearing heads of Maceo, Gomez, and other Cuban patriots, were originally all bi-coloured; but the low values are now appearing in the usual Postal Union style—1 cent, green; 2 cents, carmine; and 5 cents, blue.

Italy.—For the Italian Post Office at Bengasi the current 25 centimes Italian has been overprinted "Bengasi—1 piastra 1.

Portugal.—For Portugal and her various colonies there has been a bewildering quantity of "Republica" surcharges, the latest stamps to be overprinted in this way being a batch of remainders of the "Vasco de Gama" pictorial stamps of 1898.

"Assistencia," or charity stamps, are a new departure for Portugal, but in Denmark and other countries this device for enforced benevolence has long been in vogue. The idea is this: The Government names certain days in the year which are to be observed as charity days, and all letters posted on such days must bear a "charity stamp" in addition to the ordinary postage. The Portuguese "Assistencia" stamp costs 10 reis (a little more than a centime), and it is necessary to affix one of them to every letter posted on October 4th or 5th; December 24th, 25th, 26th, or 30th; and January 1st or 2nd. Failure to do so, the official notices suavely state, will mean a delay in one's correspondence!

United States.—A revision of Uncle Sam's postage stamps is going on with a view to all values being indicated in numerals instead of words. A reshuffling of portraits is taking place at the same time, and in future the 1c. to 5c. inclusive will all bear the head of Washington, while the 6 cents and higher values up to 50 cents will all have the head of Benjamin Franklin.

Austria.—Apparently a change of colour has taken place in the printing of the 60 heller, for Messrs. Bright & Son have kindly sent me specimens of recent arrival in quite a dark claret shade. The official colour for this value is deep carmine, and the difference between the two shades is very marked.

COLLECTORS IN COUNCIL

A PARAGUAY PLURAL

"I have the 1c. of Paraguay, 1892 issue, with the word of value printed in the plural—thus: '1 centavos.' Is this a well-known error, and has it any greater value on account of the misprint?"—*E. J. S., Northwich.*

The "1 centavos" is an error which remained current for nearly four years before the mistake was rectified. It stands to reason that it must have been noticed, for the error would be even more glaring in Paraguay, where Spanish is the national language, than it is here; but probably it did not seem a matter of very urgent importance to the Paraguayan authorities. Not until the reissue of 1896 on

chalk-surfaced paper was the word correctly spelled "centavo." The error is worth very little more than the normal stamp, both varieties being fairly common.

A COLLECTION OF TELEGRAPH STAMPS

"Having a small collection of telegraph stamps I would like your advice as to whether to add to it. Are telegraphs much collected, and are they likely to rise in value?"—*N. V. S., Newcastle-on-Tyne.*

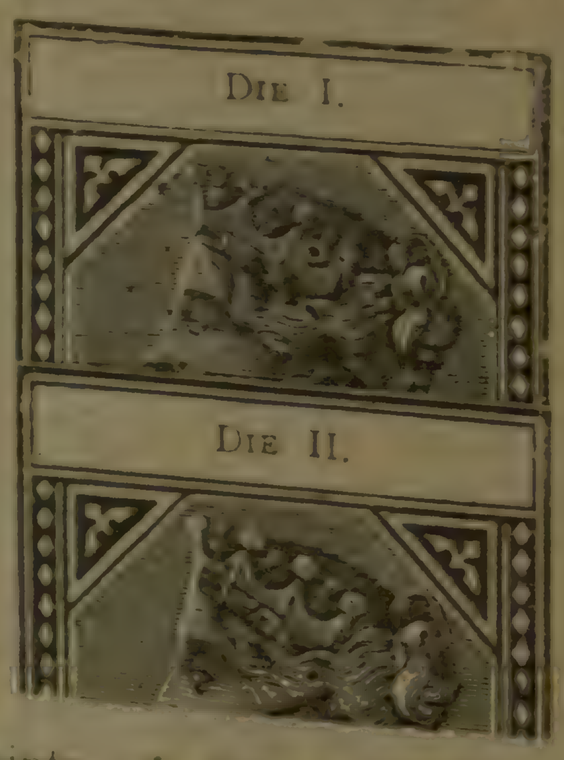
Here's quite a portmanteau question! But as other Captainites may be curious about telegraph stamps an answer to "N. V. S." may be of very general interest.

I say add to your collection of telegraphs by all means, but do not sink much money in the enterprise, as there are but few collectors or dealers in this country who go in for these stamps. Thus there is only a limited market, and one would not find it an easy matter to sell out. Telegraphs, however, are fully as interesting as postals; and, of course, in a sense, they *are* postage stamps; for what is a telegram but an express letter? But it is the "catalogue" that dictates the fashion in matters philatelic, and as our British catalogues do not list telegraph stamps they are not collected—*vaille que vaut!* But abroad they are studied almost as keenly as postals, and the latest Continental handbook to reach me, the "Catalogue de Timbres-Poste" of Messrs. Yvert & Tellier, gives particulars and prices of all the world's issues of stamps for telegraphic purposes.

ABOUT THE "QUEEN'S HEAD" DIES

"Would you tell me the readiest way of distinguishing between Die I. and Die II. of the Queen Victoria's head issues of Colonial stamps?"—*A. K. R., Dudley.*

The dies this reader means are the De La Rue dies used for the Queen's Head stamps of Turks Islands, and certain other colonies. It is important to appreciate the differences between Dies I. and II. in attempting any complete collection of British colonies. Six or more different tests have been given from time to time, embracing various points of the crown, the hair, and the features. I think for a handy and infallible means of distinction one cannot do better than look at the thick downward line defining the front of the Queen's eye. In my illustration, which gives an enlarged reproduction of Dies I. and II. respectively, it will be seen that this line in Die I. stops short at the base of the eye, whereas in Die II. it travels downwards into the cheek.



REPLIES TO CORRESPONDENTS

C. G. B. (Kensington) is collecting Europeans only, and wishes to know where to draw the line in Levantine issues. The best and the only safe course if one wishes to collect *everything* European is to take all issues for "the Levant," except those expressly issued for places outside Europe.

Miss D. E. P. (Hants) responds to my recent invitation to Captainites to name the stamps they think most likely to rise in value. This reader suggests that some of the Portuguese stamps of the Monarchist series, both continental and colonial, will be scarcer, as so many have been overprinted "Republica." Another stamp already hard to get, in Miss D. E. P.'s experience, is the British (King Edward) 4*d.* brown and green.

S. W. C. (Bristol) seeks advice as to a philatelic society for beginners. I should be glad to welcome him as a fellow-member of the Society of Stamp Collectors, of which I have the honour to be president. This is a society of over 1,500 members in all parts of the British Empire. The low subscription of 1*s.* 6*d.* per annum makes it specially suitable for beginners in the hobby.

C. H. (Cork) is puzzled because he has a half-penny green British (Queen Victoria) which is not green at all, but distinctly blue! This, however, is a very common phenomenon, for the ½*d.* green of 1900-1902, owing to some property in the ink, turns blue on being immersed in water. No value attaches to the "variety," since it is one that any collector can create for himself—if he wants it!

L. T. T. (Clapton) wishes to "collect in continents," and asks me which he should take first. The obvious reply is Europe. Where will you find such interest and variety as in European stamps, including as they do our own country, the German States, the Italian Duchies, the Cantons of Switzerland? The only drawback is that, if L. T. T. begins with Europe and does it thoroughly, he may not live long enough to choose a second continent! If a cheaper and easier section be wanted, try South America.

Ellanee (Boscombe) asks the "exact meaning" of the term "post-marked to order." Stamps post-marked to order are those supplied to the stamp trade by amiable foreign governments who desire to provide philatelists with "used" stamps that have never been through the post, but which bear nice, light cancellations. Most collectors bar them from their albums, as being neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring.

G. H. P. (Watford) inquires how and where he can obtain "mixed common stamps" to give to boys whom he is trying to interest in stamp collecting. An assortment good enough for this purpose can be got for about a shilling a thousand, and any of the stamp-dealing firms advertising in THE CAPTAIN will supply "G. H. P." if he clearly explains what he wants.

This Competition closes on January 20th, 1912

SPECIAL COMPETITION FOR STAMP COLLECTORS

FIRST PRIZE (Goods value Two Guineas) from Messrs. Whitfield King & Co.

SECOND PRIZE (Goods value Thirty Shillings) from Messrs. Errington & Martin

THIRD PRIZE (Goods value One Guinea) from Messrs. Bright & Son

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AND MANY VALUABLE CONSOLATION PRIZES from Messrs. Lawn & Barlow, the Midland Stamp Co., Mr. James Rhodes, Messrs. Hamilton & Co., the Empire Stamp Co., Mr. William Ward, Mr. F. G. Rowe, Mr. J. E. Lea, Messrs. Lightbown & Co., Mr. H. McCraight, and Mr. W. H. Peckitt.

What You Have to Do

On this page are reproduced twelve incomplete postage stamps—that is to say, stamp designs from which some portion has been taken away or obliterated. This is the last set of pictures, the other two having appeared in our November and December numbers.

What you have to do is to say what country each incomplete stamp belongs to.

Do not cut the magazine, but write your solution on a sheet of paper, giving the number of each incomplete stamp, together with the name of the country to which you think it belongs.

If you cannot recognise some of the stamps on sight, search for them in your philatelic catalogue. They are all adhesive postage stamps, to be found illustrated in all complete stamp catalogues. If you do not possess a catalogue, get one at once. It will be worth while.

You must send in your list of answers on or before January 20th, 1912, and your age must be stated. Address the envelope to "The Stamp Competition," THE CAPTAIN, 8, Southampton Street, Strand, W.C.

A competition coupon from *each* of the November, December, and January numbers of THE CAPTAIN must be enclosed with the complete list of answers. If you want to have two tries for this competition you must, of course, send two *complete* lists, and a set of three coupons with each.

POINTS TO REMEMBER.—(1) Only the name of *one* country must be placed against each number. A breach of this rule will mean disqualification. (2) This page is not to be cut, but a *numbered and complete list* of answers, with your name and address, is to be sent in by January 20th.

The Editor's decision and awards in this competition must be accepted as final. In the event of a tie, neatness and age will be taken into account.

These are the Stamps you have to Identify

Final Set

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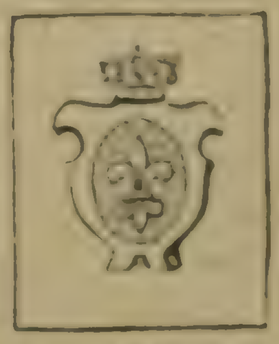

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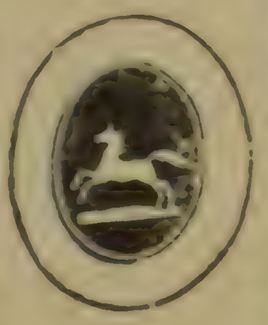

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This competition is quite simple, and every stamp collecting Captainite should enter it, and tell his friends about it. All that is required is a careful study of a stamp catalogue. If you have not a catalogue, you will find many excellent ones advertised in our advertisement pages. They are quite inexpensive, and

THE PRIZES IN THIS COMPETITION ARE WORTH WINNING.

THE HOLE IN THE FLOOR

Telling of the secret retreat of four boys of Castleburgh College, and how it was discovered

By CAPTAIN G. A. HOPE

CHAPTER I

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

AT first sight it was hardly a desirable spot in which to spend a cold winter afternoon. To begin with, its very name was against it. All Castleburgh knew it as the haunted house, though there was no record of anyone having seen a ghost there. But it certainly had been the scene of an unpleasant tragedy, since which it had never been inhabited, and it stood, unroofed and crumbling, overgrown with weeds and brushwood, on a tangled, jungle-clad slope of waste ground overlooking the railway, the wreck of a four-roomed, jerry-built cottage.

However, Vale, Rowe, Derring, and Carey, of Bourne House, cared for none of these things. To them it represented an ideal Sunday afternoon resort, and its evil reputation and pathless surroundings were but so many points in its favour. The most comfortable of retreats on a frequented way would not have suited them at all.

The fact was, I regret to say, that they went there to smoke, from which their preference for the haunted house becomes more intelligible. Moreover, it contained an ideal hiding-place for their illicit properties—a still rain-proof cupboard, effectually concealed by brushwood, which had been discovered by Vale. It was well to have a hiding-place for such goods. The possession of them about the person was fraught with too many risks.

It must not for a moment be supposed from this that these four law-breakers were wasters. They were all of them about eighteen. Vale and Rowe were in the army class, and going up for Sandhurst during the term, and Derring and Carey were in the Upper Fifth. All had made their mark in games. Vale was in the fifteen, Rowe in the eleven, and the others were also men of caps, well earned.

But on this particular Sunday they were destined to be disappointed. They had reached their ill-omened retreat safely. Rowe and Carey sat down on fallen beams, and Derring went to the hidden cupboard, while Vale pulled himself up by one of the surviving joists to the upper storey, and climbed on to the end wall, against which a thick elm tree grew. Derring had just got the cupboard-door open when Vale spoke.

"Nothing doing," he said, casually. "Put the gear back."

All three looked up apprehensively. He seemed quite unconcerned, but, as a matter of fact, his behaviour was strictly studied. He was acting as a scout, and had seen danger in the offing.

"Nothing much to see, and beastly uncomfortable," he added carelessly, after a pause. "Look out, I'm coming down. It's Ralston," he added, as he joined his companions. "I thought I saw him cocking his evil eye at us after Hall. He'll never be satisfied till our scalps are drying on his wigwam-pole. He doesn't know that I saw him, and I know he didn't see me, till I let him do so, when I chucked a brickbat, casual-like, more or less in his direction, just as a signal."

"I wish you'd broken his head, by accident," growled Rowe. "The beast's spoilt our afternoon. What are we to do?"

"Make a leisurely and dignified exit in the direction of the sleuthhound," replied Vale. "And leave the patter to me. Above all things, Rowe, don't insult him."

They climbed out of the pit in the hillside, in which the cottage stood, and a little way down a goat-track they met the suspicious prefect.

It is a mistake to think that all studious boys are smugs. Contrary to the frantic wails of the enemies of public schools, sound cricket and scholarship and general decency of character go

hand in hand more often than not. But Ralston was a smug of the smuggest. He had been for some time in the same form as the four law-breakers in earlier days, and had suffered much at their hands and feet—not altogether undeservedly. For instance, if asked to give a con of a difficult passage just before school, he had been known to say, in a querulous whine, "Why should I? You should have done it yourself. If I tell you, you'll get marks for it and I shan't."

Of course, such a boy is kicked severely and often; but he also climbs rapidly to the Sixth, and having arrived there Ralston set himself to get his own back on his tormentors. So far he had not achieved any notable success, especially as they were not in his house; but eventually he discovered that they took walks to unusual resorts on Sunday afternoons, and decided at once that they smoked, and made up his mind to catch them.

"What are you chaps doing here?" he demanded, fiercely.

"Botanising, Ralston," replied Vale, amiably. "Our Mr. Derring—who is, as you know, a naturalist of repute—heard that the rather rare *Spineolophagus psychopathawacus* grew in great profusion and beauty here. Only it doesn't. Someone must have been pulling his leg, don't you think, Ralston? Unless perhaps you've seen it. Have you?"

"Look here, I'm not going to be rotted by you," exclaimed Ralston, excitedly. "I believe you're smoking."

"You can search me," replied Vale. "If you can believe that you can believe anything. What a fearful and wonderful thing you are, Ralston! Has it ever occurred to you?"

"I'll have you up before a prefects' meeting——" began Ralston, at which, taking their cue from Vale, all four fell on their knees before him, and began to weep loudly.

"Please, it wasn't me," said Vale, between sobs; "I'm not smoking. Tried once, and it made me so ill; so let me off this once. Besides, I'm an orphan."

Ralston spluttered wrath for a few moments, and then he broke past his four tormentors, who rose to their feet.

"Shocking ass, Ralston!" said Rowe, dusting his knees. "What's to be done now? It's too early to go home yet."

"Let's go to Cole's," suggested Derring.

Cole was a naturalist, taxidermist, and dealer in small animals, who lived on the outskirts of the town not far off, and he and Derring were kindred spirits.

"What on earth for?" exclaimed Rowe, who had a lofty contempt for natural history, and for everything else he did not understand, which formed a rather lengthy list.

"He's got some waltzing mice," said Derring, quite unabashed. "I want to see them."

"Rats!" said Vale.

"No, mice, you funny ass!" retorted Derring. "They're Japanese, and they do dance. If you don't believe it, come and see. It'll be good for you, especially for old Rowe."

There was nothing else to do, so they strolled off to the dark little shop, where Cole made them welcome for Derring's sake, although it was Sunday. The mice were produced, and proved their ability to dance beyond cavil. Even Rowe was impressed a little, and they spent over half an hour inspecting the mice and other curiosities. Derring would gladly have stayed there all the afternoon, but the others dragged him out at last, and they sauntered back to house, noticing with delight that Ralston was still behind them.

"I think I must buy some of those mice," said Derring at last, breaking a long silence to interrupt a discussion on the prospects of the School Fifteen.

"What's the good?" growled Rowe, who thought keeping pets, even dogs, except sporting dogs in kennels in the yard, evidence of insanity. "Besides, where would you keep them?"

"Oh, Cole would do that till the end of the term."

"Piffle!" said Rowe. "Look here, hurry up, or we shall be late for tea with Mrs. D."

Mrs. Dainton, the Dame of Bourne House, entertained some of the olders boys in the house at tea on half-holidays and Sundays, and the four law-breakers were great favourites of hers. Thus adjured Derring and the rest stepped out; but when they reached the stone alley below the study wing Vale paused, looked into a little grating, and then thumped the concrete wall with a piece of wood.

"What's troubling you?" asked Carey, looking back.

"It has just occurred to me that this is exactly below my study," said Vale, "and that I can see daylight."

"Wonderful!" said Rowe. "Simply marvellous! So it is—fancy discovering that!"

"Don't be unkind; I do sometimes discover things. But let it pass. Let us go in, and worry our Mrs. Dainton's muffins."

But he did not seem able to get his discovery out of his head, and during tea he questioned

Mrs. Dainton about the arrangements of the house, and especially as to what the space under the studies was used for.

"Nothing," she replied. "It's really only foundations, but you can see them that side because the house is built on the side of a hill."

"I see," said Vale. "Possible palatial dungeons lying waste. How do you get there?

The shopkeeper brought out the mice and greatly interested his visitors. "I really must buy them," said Derring, "though they'll be a nuisance at the school."

I may want to immure a refractory fag any day."

"You can't get there at all," she replied, with a laugh. "Who do you want to put there?"

"Young Crofton; he breaks something regularly three times a week," replied Vale. "Well, it can't be helped. I must put up with him, I suppose."

CHAPTER II

A SPLENDID DISCOVERY

"I'M afraid we must admit that the haunted house can shelter us no more," said Vale suddenly, when the four friends were going up to play football two days later. There was a growl of acquiescence.

"Yet men of our years must have their smoke," he pursued. "What would you say if I told you I had discovered a safe retreat, cosy and replete with every convenience, where neither Ralston, nor Hall, nor the Pip can molest us?"

Hall was head of the house, and a not very zealous one. The Pip was Mr. Phillips, its master, a great scholar, and notoriously the

worst disciplinarian and most easily gulled master in college.

"I should say you were nearly as smart as you think you are. I can't say more than that, can I?" said Derring, putting Carey between himself and Vale.

"Yes; you could compare my wisdom with your own," replied Vale. "But what would you all say if I told you, as I do, that to prepare this refuge requires working capital—which for Rowe's information means funds for expenses, half a crown all round."

"Go to Bath!" retorted Rowe. "What for?"

"Appliances that I shall need. I won't say more now."

"Then you won't get my half-crown," said Rowe, decidedly.

"Nor mine," said Carey.

"But perpend," pleaded Vale. "Remember who thought of the haunted house, and who found the cupboard there? Derring, who has brains, is half convinced already. Let my proposition soak through the timber of your skulls till after football, and then decide. If I fail the loss will be mine alone."

They did think, and the conclusion they came to was that Vale, though he talked nonsense and made a jest of everything, had been a sound and reliable leader ever since, as four bewildered thirteen-year-old fags, they had drifted together by chance in their first few days in the house.

"All right," said Rowe, as they went back to change after the game. "We'll stump up, but you'll hear about it if it doesn't come off."

"I don't doubt it," said Vale. "But the thing is that it will come off. Now all you have to do is to possess your souls in patience, and thank Providence that we have two blind bats as house master and head of the house."

But it was hardly fair to call Hall and Mr. Phillips blind; for even Vale's friends, who kept a sharp watch on him, could not see that he was doing anything, and openly expressed their scepticism. But Vale was not to be drawn, and neither insults nor diplomacy could make him reveal his secret till Sunday afternoon.

"It is done, and beyond my fondest hopes," he said, as they walked back to house after dinner in the college hall. "Come and see."

"But where is it? You're going to house," replied Derring.

"True, O king—to my study," said Vale. "That will be, so to speak, our jump-off."

He would say no more till they were in his study, and Rowe had lowered himself into the easy-chair.

"In the first place, Rowe," he said, "get on your long legs again."

"Goat!" said Rowe. "I believe it is all rot."

"No such thing," said Vale, shifting the chair. "This study contains more than you dream of."

So saying he pulled up the carpet, which to all appearances was still nailed down, and displayed to his astonished friends a small, oblong hole in the flooring, just large enough to admit them.

"Now, who is the great man?" he went on. "I needed the cash for tools to make this. I thought of it at once when I saw the hole in the wall. What more do you ask? Detection is impossible, for the carpet is nailed to the trap-door, which is on four well-oiled hinges. Now come below."

It was the usual dungeon, strewed with builders' waste, but a corner had been cleared, and some empty boxes provided for seats, on one of which stood a bag of biscuits, some stone ginger-beer bottles, and a small box of cigarettes.

"From the balance of your money," he said, pointing to them. "But this is not all. I have raided our old retreat, and——"

He went to a dark corner, and showed them a little roughly contrived cupboard between two joists above them, in which were the conveniences they had kept at the haunted house.

"If the place is raided it's ten to one they won't see that," he went on. "Now what do you say?"

"Sound man," said Rowe. "But where does that light come from?" he added, pointing to a pencil of light from above.

"The builders put a short plank into my study floor," said Vale, "and so left a gap by the wall, under the hot-water pipes, presumably for the convenience of mice, for there is a most handy ledge for them on top of the brickwork below it. Let us enjoy ourselves, but remember one thing. No guffaws down here, and no experiments. We are safe, but we do not want this house to obtain a reputation for being haunted."

"How you do talk," said Rowe. "Here, pass us the ginger-beer, and shut up."

CHAPTER III

DERRING BUYS THE MICE

THEY knew better than to make too frequent use of their retreat, and consequently no one in the house had the vaguest suspicion of its existence.

At last, one Sunday towards the end of term, Rowe said to Derring and Carey :—

"You two chaps will have to go without for a bit."

"I say—why?" exclaimed Carey.

"Because Vale and I are going up for our Sandhurst exam.," replied Rowe, "and his study door will be locked while he is away."

"Oh, look here, can't that be dodged?" said Derring.

"Now I come to think of it, it is just possible," said Vale. "Derring, don't you love my library?"

Vale had a hobby of collecting the pretty, cheap editions of successful novels which are so much in vogue.

"No, I don't; all piffling novels," replied Derring, whose line in literature was mostly natural history and travel.

"Never mind," said Vale; "you've got to love them, you and Carey. Also the brewing gear is in my study. I see no reason why it should be shifted for so short a time. It is only necessary to make the worthy Pip see eye to eye with me."

Accordingly at the hour of evening audience Vale invaded his house master's study.

"Might my study be left unlocked while I am away, sir?" he said, deferentially, when the Pip asked his business.

"Really, that is rather a strange request, Vale," replied the Pip. "Why do you want it left open?"

"For Derring and Carey, sir," replied Vale, at which Mr. Phillips nodded. Even he, unobservant though he was, knew of the alliance between the four big boys.

"They want to be able to get at my books, and also to brew there. We always brew in there, as it's the largest. All the things are there, and I'd rather not shift them, if you don't mind, sir."

Vale pulled up the carpet, and displayed to his astonished friends a small hole in the floor.

"I see, I see," said Mr. Phillips. "Well, under the circumstances, as they are your special friends, I see no great harm——"

"Thank you, sir," said Vale. "Shall I tell Mrs. Dainton?"

"If you please. Is that all? Very well. I hope you and Rowe will do well in your exam."

Carey and Derring saw their friends off on the following Tuesday, and on the way back from the station they had to pass Cole's. As they approached it Derring suddenly stopped,

and, putting his hand into his pocket, took out his money and counted it.

"I say," he said, "I'm going to buy those mice."

"But I thought you had bought them," said Carey—for Derring had been in the habit of visiting the mice and playing with them on every available occasion.

"No, but he's keeping them for me," replied Derring. "I thought I wouldn't pay for them till I could take them, in case they died."

"But it's a month to the end of the term yet," remarked Carey.

"I know; but why shouldn't we keep them in the cellar?"

"Ripping!" said Carey, who was also fascinated by the mice. "But Vale might object, and I know Rowe would."

"Rowe's a chump," said Derring. "What harm can they do? I didn't think of it before. However, if Vale objects when he comes back we can cart them back again to Cole's for the last fortnight or three weeks. Meanwhile, we can have the fun of seeing them without having to come here."

The suggestion was approved, and just before lock-up, when it was dark, they arrived at their house, Derring with a large bulge under his ulster, and went straight to Vale's study. Here the cage was produced, and the mice were let out and fed on the table. The little creatures were very tame, used to being handled, and after a little bread and milk they stood up on their hind legs, and danced solemnly about the table, the two boys watching them with rapt attention. Suddenly Carey looked up at Vale's clock.

"My aunt!" he exclaimed. "Tea bell will go in a brace of shakes. We must hurry up and get them down. Shove 'em back into the cage, Derring."

But this had to be done deliberately and gently, and several precious minutes were wasted in housing the mice, and in their flurry neither boy noticed that the catch of the cage-door was not properly pushed home.

"I'll go down," said Derring, raising the trap-door. "You hand them to me. I say, it's beastly dark."

"Usually is in a cellar at night," said Carey. "Light the lantern."

"No time to hunt for it. Hand them down. All right, I've got them."

Carey heard him turn, and take one cautious step. Then there arose from below sounds of a tumble, a rattle, and some vigorous expressions of opinion.

"What's the matter?" he whispered.

"Fell over a box or something." A match spluttered into a flame below. "And I've dropped the cage, Carey!" His voice rose, though still in a whisper, to an agonised shriek. "The door has come open, and they've all escaped."

"Then catch 'em, you idiot!" retorted Carey.

Just then the match went out, and striking another Derring lit the half-screened lantern they used after dark, revealing the mice on the floor, and he tried to catch them. But the little creatures were terrified out of their wits by the fall, not altogether unreasonably, and directly Derring moved towards them they scuttled away into the darkness beyond recall.

Nothing more could be done then, and they slunk miserably down to tea. But for once neither had any appetite at all, and after the shortest decent interval they left hall and went back to their secret hold and lit the lantern. The cage was there, undamaged, but not a sign of the mice.

"It's no go," said Carey, dismally. "They've gone for good and all."

"Not they," said Derring, hopefully. "They are all cage-bred, and they'll come back again. We must arrange a trap for them."

"A fat lot of use that'll be," said Carey, who was pessimistic, "after the scare you gave them. The next thing we shall hear will be that they've been waltzing round the hearthrug in the Pip's study."

"Rot!" said Derring. "These sort of beasts won't go far. They aren't like rats. We must put down some food for them to get them used to coming here for it, and meanwhile, let's take the cage up and see what we can do."

But contriving a trap out of a cage did not prove as easy as they had hoped. None of their devices proved of avail, though the mice were certainly still there. They saw them occasionally, often on the ledge formed by the top of the brickwork, and the food was always eaten. But they obstinately refused to be caught, and those few days proved conclusively to Derring and Carey the old adage of the discomforts of the way of transgressors. They were the most miserable they had ever spent; even illicit tobacco ceased to have any charms for them, and they never once used their retreat for the purpose for which it had been designed.

"It's no good," said Derring one morning, when they found the mice had eaten all the bait out of their latest contrivance, and left it unsprung. "We must get a proper trap—one with a platform that goes down—and

bury it. That won't hurt them. Let's go down at twelve and buy one."

They went; but Castleburgh is only a very small country town, and the kind they wanted was not to be had. However, an enterprising ironmonger undertook to order it for them on prepayment, and with that they had to be content.

They thought it was never coming, and made the ironmonger wonder why they were so eager for it. But at last it did arrive, on the morning of the day before Vale and Rowe were expected back. The very thing they wanted, with a beautifully balanced platform, delicately poised enough to capture even a feather-weight dancing mouse, and they took it away joyfully. Before midday dinner they had buried it in the *débris* on the cellar floor, after smearing its platform with sweetened gum, to hold some crumbs to it when it swung down, and covered it and the ground near it with everything most likely to attract the palate of the most fastidious of mice.

That was all they could do. The rest lay with the mice, who must be left severely alone, and when they had their brew in Vale's study that afternoon they heroically resisted the temptation to go down and see if their pets were caught. But they had little doubt of the success of their trap. They knew that the mice fed regularly under the study floor, but Derring had noticed that they touched very little during the day, so he vetoed inspection when Carey proposed it, and they went to bed, hoping confidently to find the mice in durance vile by morning.

CHAPTER IV

THE DISCOVERY

MR. PHILLIPS was not an energetic house master, nor a great disciplinarian. It was hardly to be expected that a scholar with so many distinctions would be. But occasionally it did occur to him that he had certain duties to perform, and on that night, just at bed-time, it occurred to him that he had not been round the studies for some time. The fact that the boys were not now in them did not occur to him till he reached the lower corridor.

Accordingly he was about to return, and go round the dormitories instead, when he noticed a slight smell of gas, and setting down his lamp opposite an open study door, he went on to investigate it. It did not prove very serious—a tap not fully off—and having put it right he went back to his lamp, and as he stooped to pick it up he glanced mechanically into the study, which happened to be Vale's. He did not pick up his lamp—perhaps it was as well that he did not—but stood, still stooping, gazing into the study.

He took off his spectacles, wiped them, and put them on again. But it was no airy vision that he had seen. They were still there, four dainty little white mice, on their hind legs, with their tails curled up, pirouetting gracefully round and round amid a few cake-crumbs on the floor.

"Now I know why Vale wanted them to have the use of his study," he remarked, grimly. "But how could they have kept them without the servants discovering it? And senior boys, too! How painfully childish!"

With a view to further investigation he now took up his lamp, and stepped into the study; on this the mice promptly took fright, and bolted to the hole under the hot-water pipes. Mr. Phillips knelt down and peered underneath, and noticing that the edge of the carpet curled up a little, he pulled it back slightly, and saw the hole—the one the boys had seen from below—by which the mice had entered the study. Then, quite accidentally, he noticed that the whole carpet was loose.

"Very slovenly," he said. "I must have it——"

Just then he was conscious of movement under his knee, and after that discoveries followed each other thick and fast.

In spite of the time of year Derring and Carey were out of bed promptly at house-bell, and were at Vale's study long before anyone else was even half dressed. Then calamity enveloped them like a garment. It was locked.

For quite a minute they stood still, paralysed with consternation.

"The Pip can never have twigged it," gasped Derring at last.

"Someone must have," said Carey. "Probably one of the skivvies. What are we to do?"

"Nothing," groaned Derring. "We're in for it."

At every moment they expected the fatal summons, but it had not come when Vale and Rowe arrived back from London. Before going to their studies the latter went to report themselves, and after inquiries about their exam. and how they had done, Mr. Phillips said:—

"By the way—oh, wait a moment, please." He touched a bell, adding to the servant. "Tell Mr. Derring and Mr. Carey that I want them, please."

"Now it's come," said Carey, despairingly, on receiving the fatal message. "I suppose it means the sack."

But whatever they felt they were old enough to conceal their feelings, and they walked in as if nothing was the matter, showing no emotion even when they saw Vale and Rowe, the former as careless as usual, the latter looking doggedly perplexed.

"I suppose you boys know why I have sent for you?" began Mr. Phillips.

There was no reply.

"Very well, I will explain then," went on Mr. Phillips. "Really in boys of your age a man has a right to expect better respect for rules, and least of all does one expect them to be broken for so childish a reason. I have nothing to say against the study of living nature. It is an elevating as well as an interesting subject; and I must admit that there is something that is attractive, however illicit and puerile it be, in the hobby you have taken up."

By this time Rowe looked openly amazed, and even Vale seemed puzzled. But Carey and Derring breathed more freely, and prayed that Rowe would hold his tongue. They knew that Vale could be trusted to rise to the occasion.

"But," pursued the Pip, "there is a strict and very necessary rule against live animals being kept in studies, of which you were evidently not unmindful, as, strictly speaking, you made arrangements to avoid offending against the letter of the law, and so fell into a worse fault. To provide a home for your pets I find you have actually contrived a trap-door in the floor of your study—very ingeniously, I admit. You must be held primarily responsible, then, Vale, for the presence of these little animals, which I found in a trap under your study, and transferred to what was obviously their cage."

So saying, he stretched down his hand, and, throwing aside a cloth, put the cage with the four mice in it on his table. Derring's judgment had not been at fault.

"But, sir——" began Rowe, boiling over.

He stopped suddenly. Vale, in stepping forward carelessly, had trodden heavily on his toe.

"I beg your pardon, Rowe," said Vale, courteously. "I am very sorry, sir," he went on, as Rowe relapsed into silence, scowling malevolently at the mice. "I know I did wrong in making that trap-door, and am quite ready to bear the consequences. I made it myself, unassisted, and the others knew nothing about it till it was done. But I hope you won't let this interfere with my going to Sandhurst."

"No, I will not do that," said Mr. Phillips. "I like the way you have spoken, Vale. Well, Carey and Derring, what have you to say?"

"Nothing, sir," said Derring. "We kept the mice, and let them escape."

"Rowe," went on Mr. Phillips, "what was your share in this escapade?"

"I used the trap-door, sir, after it was made," he began, and then grew red and fidgeted.

His mind worked slowly, but it had gradually dawned upon him that he was being charged, not with the more robust offence of smoking, but as an accessory after the fact with being a party to keeping the mice in the basement. He would rather have owned to any crime than incur such ignominy. But luckily Mr. Phillips misunderstood him quite satisfactorily.

"I quite understand, Rowe," he said. "You do not wish to excuse yourself, as your friends have not done so. But I see that you are very little to blame."

"Excuse me, sir," said Vale. "I alone am to blame, as I said just now."

"And did you make the refuge expressly for your mice?" queried Mr. Phillips.

Derring and Carey glanced at their leader, wondering how he would answer. They knew he would not lie, no matter what the consequences. But he was equal to the occasion.

"No, sir," he replied. "I discovered by accident that there was a space there, and made the trap-door more for amusement than for any other reason. The mice came after."

"They're mine, sir," said Derring. "I meant to get them at the end of the term, but thought this would be a good place to keep them in."

There was a short silence, and profiting by it one of the mice began to waltz solemnly, and in a moment or two the others joined in. The four boys smiled involuntarily, and Mr. Phillips, glancing down at the cage, did so too.

"They are quaint little animals," he said. "I was going to have them destroyed, but I will not do so. Where did you get them? From Cole? Very well, I will arrange that he keeps them till the end of term. That will do. Rowe and Carey will be gated to the house for twenty-four hours and do a hundred lines each. You two may go."

Twenty minutes later Vale and Derring burst into Carey's study, where Rowe was holding forth in unmeasured terms on the idiocy of keeping pets in general and in particular.

"And but for your putrid, prancing mice we

should have had our smoking-room till the end of term," he was saying.

"Dry up, you chuckle-head!" interrupted Vale. "What did we get? Oh, two days gates and two hundred! No, we shouldn't have kept our room. The mice were our salvation. We've been Mrs. Dainton since. It seems she had guessed what was up, and like the brick she is she was going to say nothing. But the butler had heard something going on down there, and actually told the Pip of his suspicions; but after the dear old man had gone down there and found the mice himself. Of course, the old man thought we only kept the mice down there; he never discovered my cupboard, and, what's more, there was no smell of smoke there. I know, because I've just been down. He forgot to give orders to have it nailed down, of course, and so I have buried everything safely."

"We didn't smoke at all," said Derring. "Didn't want to scare the mice."

"Good old mice!" said Vale. "I shall adopt a white mouse rampant as my crest. And this old thick-head, Rowe, dares to abuse them. It was providential. But we were lucky to get out of it; and after all it was a rotten thing to do. It isn't cricket to play the goat with a decent old sort like the Pip, and also on the whole—don't accuse me of platitudes; I state facts—I can't help thinking that the quiet life is most easily attained by not trying to drive the proverbial coach and four through the most cherished laws of the powers that be."

And in view of the acute misery of the last few days, Derring and Carey at least did not venture to contradict him.

"Good little boy!" growled Rowe. "Also piffler! If we hadn't been found out——"

Then the kishes of all three checked him.

THE END.

SUGAR MAKING IN JUJUY

By a "Captain" Reader

THIS little article is not supposed to be a minute description of sugar production. As a matter of fact, it is merely a brief sketch of the various processes through which the juice passes from the time it is extracted from the cane until it leaves the refinery to be placed on our breakfast table.

With the cultivation of the sugar cane I do not intend to touch in this article, though this, too, is a deeply interesting study, so we will pass direct to the moment when the cane, having reached the "ingenio" and been weighed, is tipped on to the "conveyer" and is carried aloft to the first mill, where it is crushed into small pieces and the greater portion of the juice extracted. The pressure exerted by this mill is equal to 28 cwt. the square inch, and, as on emerging from this mill the cane still has to pass through two more mills, each with a pressure equal to 30 cwt. the square inch, it can be imagined what the cane pulp is like when it is finally ejected from the last mill. As a matter of fact, it resembles the shavings from a carpenter's shop, and is quite dry, while but twenty short minutes ago it was pure sugar cane.

From the tanks into which the juice runs from the mills it is pumped into boiling pans, passing en route through sulphur fumes in order to purify it, and also receiving a certain proportion of lime to enable it to form a white precipitate.

In the boiling pans the juice is heated to 120degs. centigrade, and from there it is run off into settling tanks, where the heavier substances having fallen to the bottom, the clean juice is decanted and passes to the evaporators—huge iron tanks covered with gauges and also fitted with a thick plate-glass window, through which the juice can be seen hissing and bubbling. The juice remains in the evaporators until it has attained a degree of 50 per cent. of solid matter, and it is then returned to the boiling pans, where it is still further evaporated until 95 per cent. of solid matter is formed, this matter being called molasses.

The sugar has now reached a stage when it must be left for at least twenty-four hours in order that it may crystallise, but it requires careful watching at this point, for should it be left too long the molasses become too thick and are rendered unfit for further use.

The sugar having attained the proper degree of crystallisation, it is run into tanks situated just above the centrifugals, into which it drops and is whirled round at from 750 to 1,200 revolutions a minute, the pure sugar being thrown to the sides of the pan, where it sticks, while the waste molasses fall to the bottom and are taken away to be reboiled to form second and third-grade sugar.

The sugar, no matter what its grade, on being taken from the centrifugals is milled until the crystals become a fine powder, and is then put in sacks to await enrailment to the nearest market.

All the sugar having been extracted from the molasses, the waste matter is taken to the *alambique*, or distillery, and there made into a native drink called *cana*, somewhat resembling rum.

From start to finish the manufacture of sugar is deeply interesting, and many an engrossing hour can be passed in an "ingenio de azucar."

H. W. W.

MODELS & MODEL MAKING

By HENRY GREENLY

Mr. Greenly, who is admittedly one of the greatest experts on model-making in the world, will be pleased to give any assistance he possibly can to Captainites interested in this splendid hobby. So if you are in doubt upon any point, or want any information whatever, write to him for advice, c/o "The Captain office."

MAKING A MODEL COAL WAGON

MY last article described the making of an "o" gauge clockwork locomotive. When built and a length of line is laid down the owner will no doubt consider the construction of some rolling-stock. Of course, a model passenger carriage would be the most desirable type of vehicle for the locomotive described, but unless the amateur is an experienced wood-worker it will be best to commence on the simplest form of railway vehicle, the four-wheeled open truck.

The drawings herewith are reproduced to 3/4ths full size for a model 8-ton truck for No. o ($1\frac{1}{4}$") gauge. If they are required for No. 1 gauge then the special scale included must be used in setting out the various pieces of wood employed, adjustments being made in the dimensions of width to allow the wheels to work properly on the standard gauge of $1\frac{3}{4}$".

The four-wheeled truck is simply a box on four wheels. However, there are certain methods of arranging the component parts which are standard to all railway companies' wagons, and which must be adopted in the model if a truly representative vehicle is the aim of the builder. The type of truck copied is known as the dumb-buffered truck. This is the simplest and best for small gauge railways, as buffer locking, *i.e.*, the entanglement of the buffers of adjacent trucks on curves, is lessened, if not eliminated, by the adoption of the "dumb" buffers.

The main timbers of a railway truck are the two side timbers, known in railway circles as the sole-bars; and in the dumb-buffered truck these are extended beyond the end timbers of the underframe—the head-stocks or buffer-planks—to form the buffers. A perspective sketch (Fig. 5) shows this.

The head-stocks may in this model be of comparatively substantial dimensions, as not only have they to form a support for the floor, but the ends of the body also.

The sides of the truck lap over the outside faces of the sole-bars, and in this way a stronger body is obtained than would be the case if the sides and ends were simply planted on the sides and ends were simply planted on top of the floor of the truck. Furthermore, these methods of construction are almost identical with those of the real vehicle.

The sole-bars as illustrated are 9/32" × 3/8" strips of wood, and American whitewood, or "bass-wood," as it is sometimes erroneously termed, is the most suitable material. The head-stocks are 9/32" × 9/32" section. The floor, sides, and ends may be 1/8" fretwood, and when the piece for the floor is marked out to the proper size, 3 7/8" long by

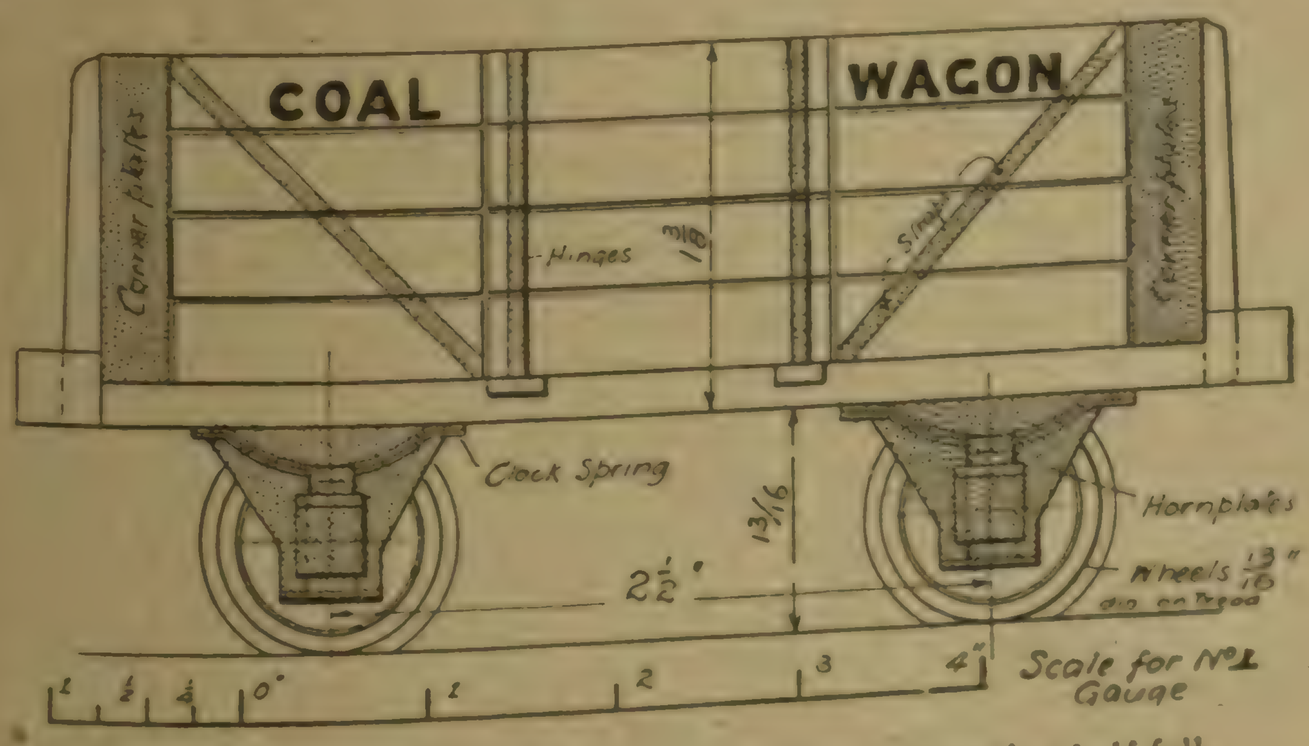


FIG. 1.—Elevation of model 8-ton coal wagon. Drawing half full-size for No. 1 gauge, and three-quarter size for No. o gauge.

1 15/16" wide, and planed up, the head-stock and sole-bars are glued down to the floor. The head-stock must overlap the end of the floor by 1/8" or the thickness of the end pieces. The sole-bars require to be cut out at the wheels so that they are barely 3/16" thick. In these recesses fit the metal horn-plates.

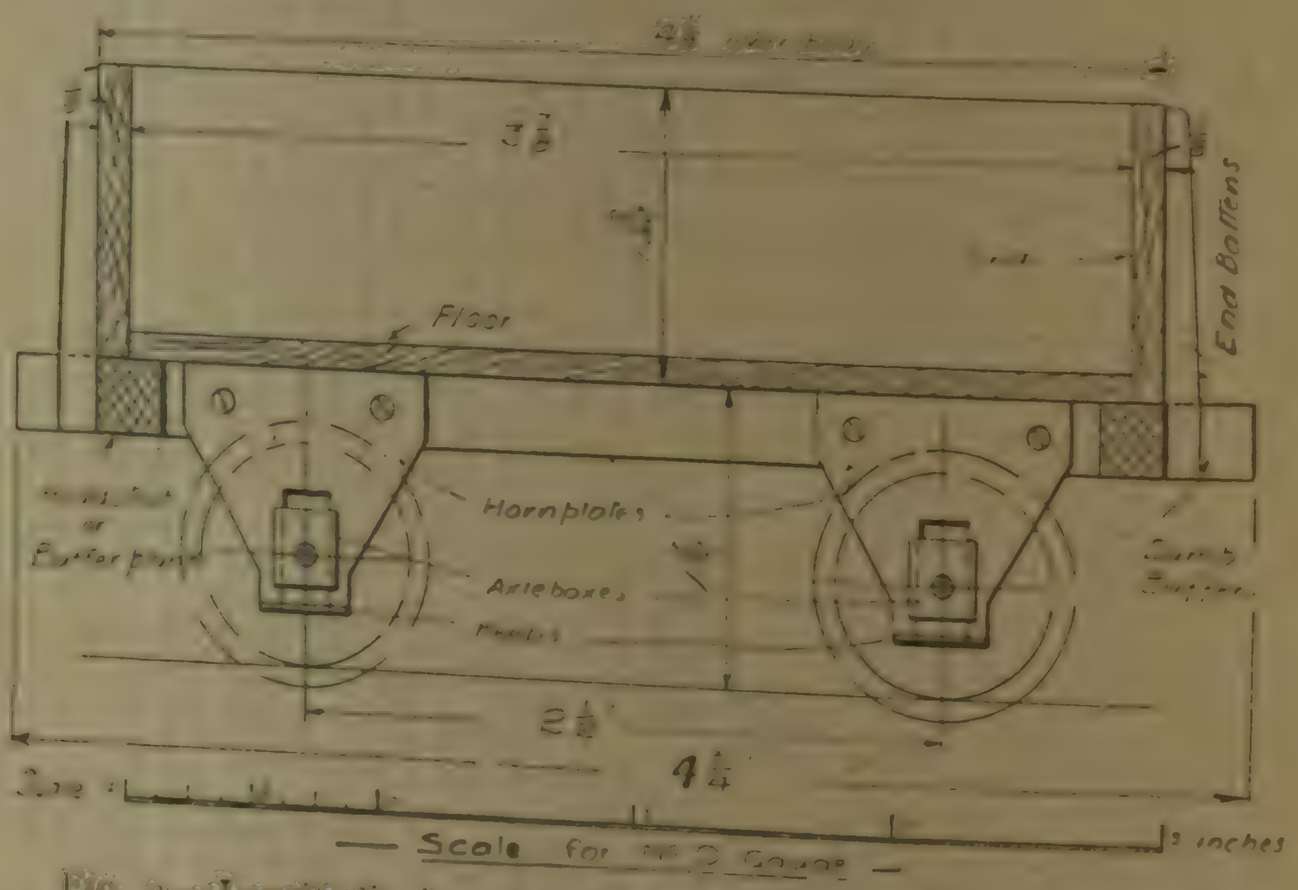


FIG. 2.—Longitudinal section of model truck. Three-quarter full size for No. 0 (1¼") gauge.

In glueing pieces of wood together the glue should be hot, and not too thick. Both articles should be spread with the adhesive, and the parts rubbed together to squeeze out all superfluous glue. To assist the glue some very fine brads, or panel-pins, should be used to brace together, say, the floor to the sole-bars, and the head-stock to the sole-bars.

In actual practice the part of the sole-bar which projects to form the dumb buffers has, because of the insufficient width of the sole-bar, to be clumped on the inside with a separate piece. This is not necessary in the design for the model under consideration, as the sole-bar (see Fig. 6) is made thicker than the strict scale equivalent would suggest, and is cut away at the crucial points—*i.e.*, over the wheels—to the normal width.

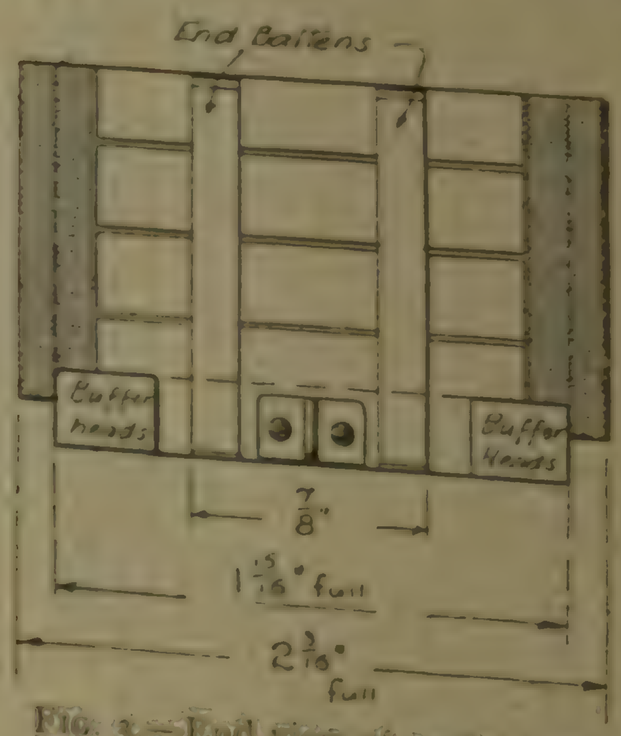


FIG. 3.—End view of model truck body.

The ends and sides may then be prepared from the 1/8" fretwood recommended, and to give a better appearance the planking of the original may be represented by lines first scribed with a knife, and then filed out clean with a three-cornered or knife-edged file. The next parts to be prepared are the end-supporting battens, which it will be noticed should taper in thickness, not in width, towards the top. The lower ends of these battens are attached to the head-stocks.

The ends should be arranged to come inside the sides, so that the latter are the full length of the vehicle.

In driving pins or screws into thin wood the necessity for first boring holes to receive them with a fine drill in, say, an Archimedean hand-drill must at all times be borne in mind.

The metal parts may then be taken in hand. As finished wheels and axles for all standard gauge model trucks and carriages are now commodities sold by most dealers in model fittings, and are almost as cheap as the rough castings—unless the builder has a lathe, and wishes to use it, it will not pay to do otherwise than purchase the wheels and axles finished at the outset. The same applies to the axle-guards, or horn-plates. However, as the making of these parts does not involve a lathe or other expensive tools, they may be constructed at home, and, moreover, the builder can in this way avail himself of the opportunity of mounting the wagon on real springs, which is an immense advantage.

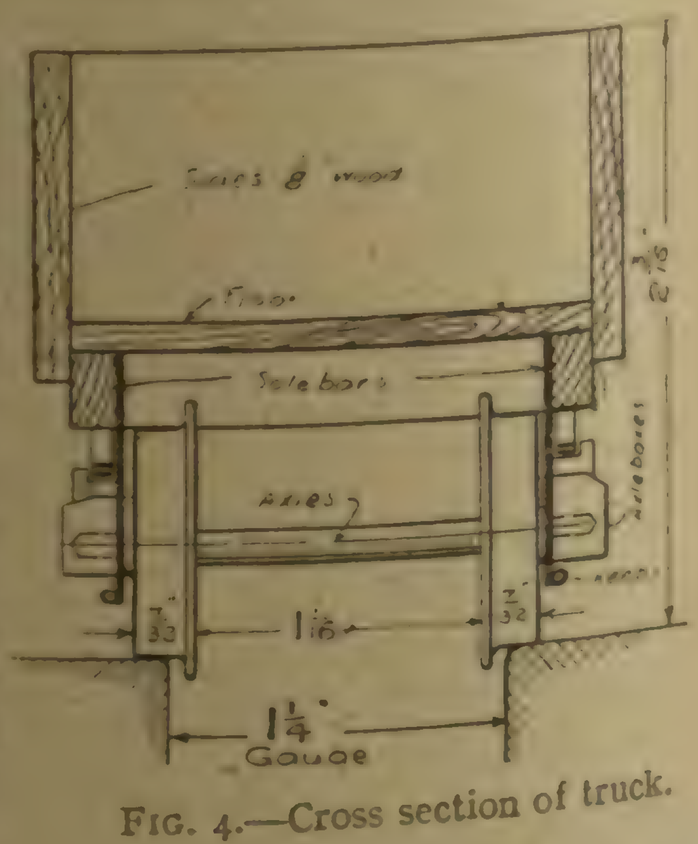


FIG. 4.—Cross section of truck.

The horn-plates, or axle-guards (Fig. 8), are thin plates of metal; hard brass is best, as the metal requires a considerable amount of strength for its thickness, and soft brass, tinplate, zinc, or any other metal which is easily bent will not serve so well. The horn-plates are shown solid for No. 0 gauge trucks, as they are rather too small to cut out into the proper bar shape adopted in the original. They are

however, slotted for the axle-boxes, which have a groove, formed by a hack-saw cut cleaned

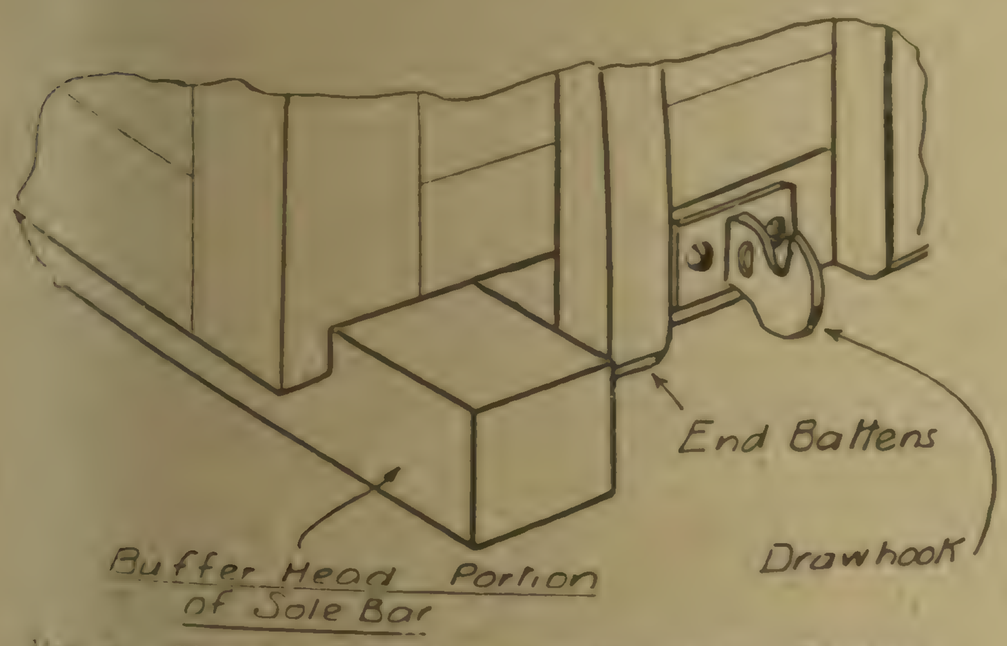


FIG. 5.—Sketch of bottom corner truck, showing dumb buffers.

out with a keen-edged file, in each side to suit. The thickness of the horn-plates should be about No. 18 or No. 20 standard wire gauge, and they may be fitted by the smallest wood-screws obtainable, such as those used by camera-makers and for other similar delicate wood-work.

The axle-boxes can be shaped out of rod brass of 5/16" × 5/16" section with small 6" files such as are used by jewellers and other small metal workers. As shown perhaps more clearly in the perspective sketch Fig. 7, the top is arranged to retain the flat springs in place. These springs are

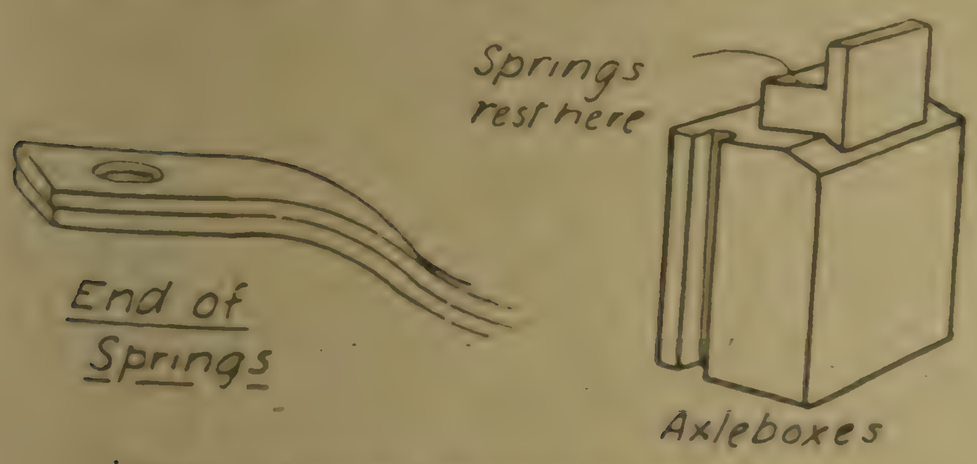


FIG. 7.—Sketch of springs and axle-boxes.

made of old watch-springs, the exact size depending on what can be obtained for a few pence from a watchmaker's shop. Two plates are suggested, but here again one, two, or three plates must be used according to the strength of the springs to hand. The truck may require to hold a weight of half a pound, and will possibly weigh nearly the same itself. This means that with two plates in each a 2 oz., weight should deflect a single piece of spring an inch long, about 1/16". The real difficulty in fitting the springs will be piercing the ends. Springs if softened can be easily punched, and to accomplish the softening process without affecting the whole spring the spring may be pushed through a small size raw potato, so that the short length of about 3/16" at the end, which requires softening, just projects.

This may be held in the flame of a spirit lamp or Bunsen burner, and the temper of the spring let down. To neatly do the work of punching a small hole in the end a proper device is desirable, as shown in Fig. 9, but as

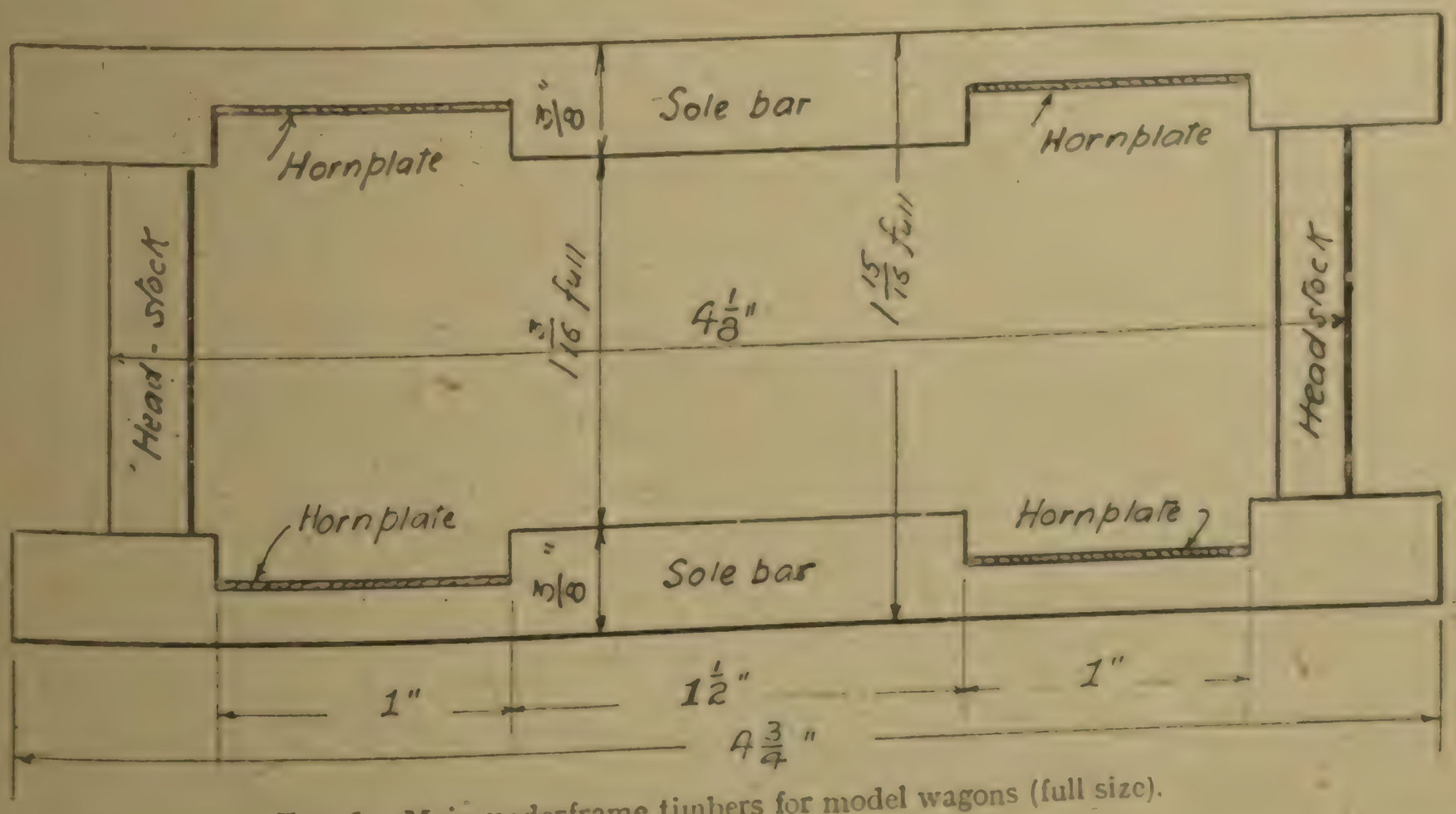
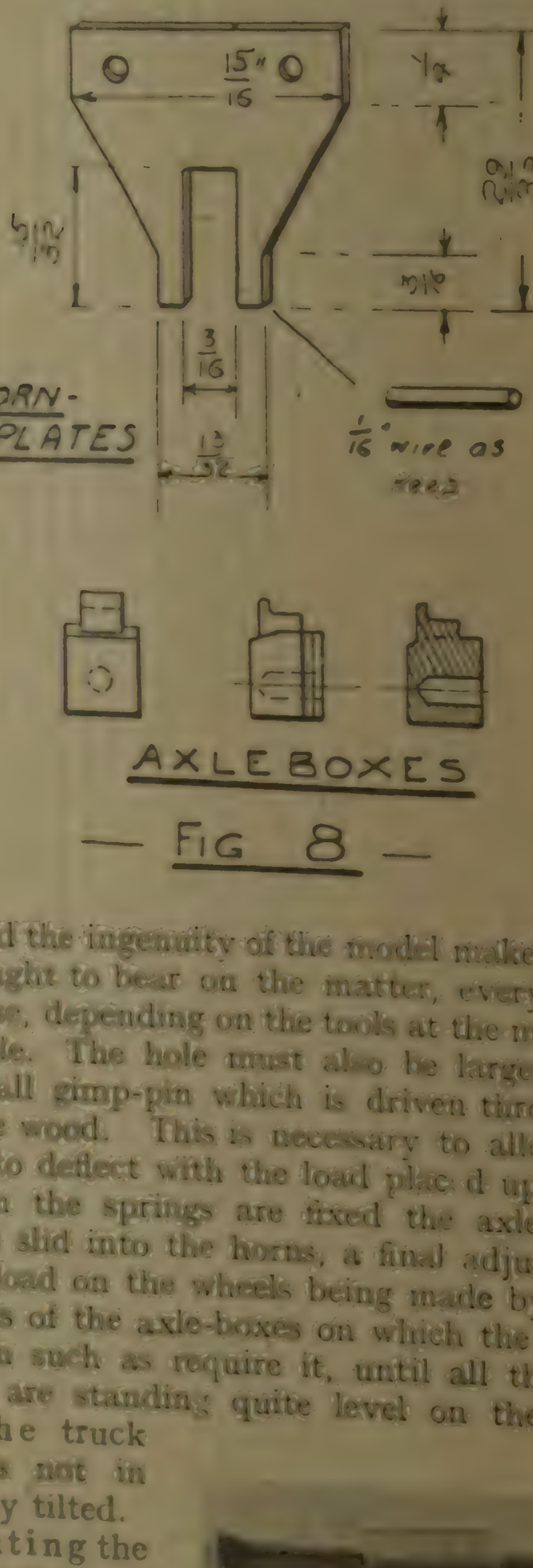


FIG. 6.—Main underframe timbers for model wagons (full size).

this work to the springs under consideration is the only job such a miniature punching-machine would be used for a less troublesome procedure may be adopted. A good hard centre-punch with a fine point may be chosen, and a small indentation made with it in a somewhat heavy piece of soft steel or brass. With the end of the spring over this indentation the operation should be repeated, which should form quite a respectable indentation in the spring. The other side will, of course, exhibit a small "pimple," which may be filed off, and in this way a hole obtained in the end of the spring. Or if the spring is sufficiently well softened it might be drilled from the centre-punch mark.

a piece of metal with an indentation backing the end of the spring being operated on. At any rate, the spring wants a hole in it at each



— FIG 8 —

end, and the ingenuity of the model maker must be brought to bear on the matter, everything, of course, depending on the tools at the moment available. The hole must also be larger than the small gimp-pin which is driven through it into the wood. This is necessary to allow the spring to deflect with the load placed upon it.

When the springs are fixed the axle-boxes may be slid into the horns, a final adjustment of the load on the wheels being made by filing the tops of the axle-boxes on which the spring rests, in such as require it, until all the four wheels are standing quite level on the rails, and the truck body is not in any way tilted.

Painting the wagon is the next question. For the body a dark lead colour is the usual, although various other colours are used in real practice. In any case "flat" colours should be used, and in procuring these at the oil and colour man's tints "ground in turps" should be stipulated. Such paint is free from oil, and will dry with a "matt" surface. A varnish, enamel, or ordinary oil paint, unless exceedingly well applied, tends to look messy on a model.

The corner-plates, straps, and hinges may be suggested by a darker colour. For the iron-work there are several brands of quick-drying black in which the medium is "amyl-acetate," the strong "pear-drop" scented liquid which one uses as a cement to mend celluloid objects.

Double Motors for Clockwork Locomotives

An idea which has lately come into vogue is fitting model clockwork locomotives with two motors. Sometimes they are placed one in the tender and the other in the locomotive; but unless the mechanisms can be chosen to suit the respective wheel diameters —the tender wheels must be smaller than those

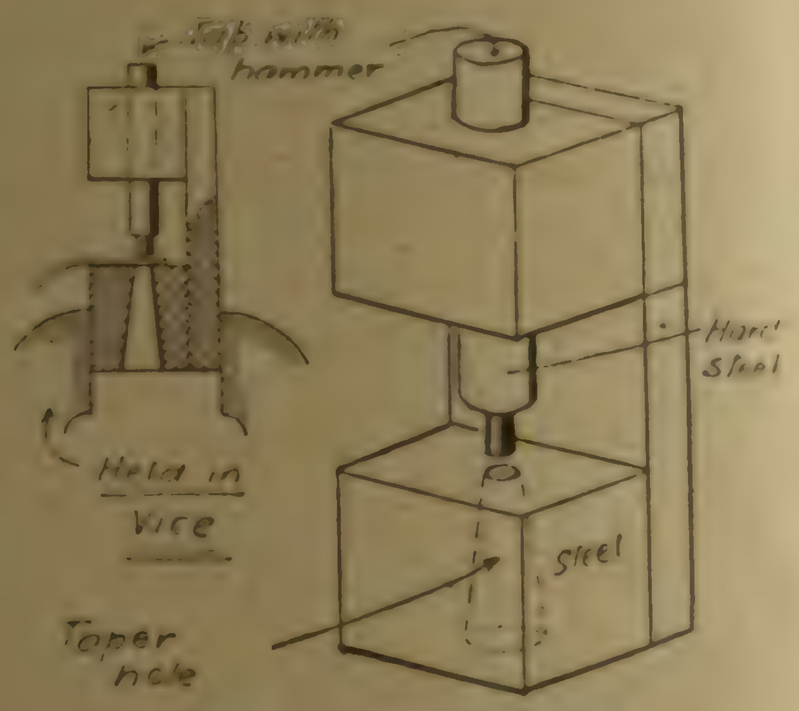


FIG. 9.—Punching device.

of the locomotive—it is better to arrange them both in the engine. The accompanying photograph shows a model six-coupled bogie engine (4–6–0 type) with two mechanisms. Both are fitted to drive on the coupled wheels, and are connected to the same reversing lever. The brake of one of the mechanisms is removed, and experience shows that if the governor of

[Photo] [Wynne.

FIG. 10.—Clockwork model 4-6-0 type express locomotive with two motor mechanisms.

one mechanism is rendered inactive by tying up the expanding portions with some fine wire the motors will synchronise much better. A point to remember in fitting two similar clockwork motors together is that they can be connected up to the same reversing lever whichever way round they are placed in the locomotive.

The Tiger of Batol

A Story of Peril and Adventure in the China Seas.

By Capt. Richard Benson.

Synopsis

Austin Chesney and Clive Denham, two old friends, meet in Plymouth, where they are enabled to render a signal service to Captain Heritage, who has a bag of pearls stolen from him by a Malay. The two boys, after an exciting chase, capture the thief, Kwala, and restore the pearls to Captain Heritage, who is exceedingly grateful.

The three encounter Terence O'Rourke, who has served before under Captain Heritage. The captain then tells them that he is about to set out on a great adventure, and invites them all to accompany him. He has fitted out the schooner *Brilliant* for a voyage to Sunshine Island, which he has leased from the Japanese Government for two years, and where he has good reason to believe there is a pearl lagoon of enormous wealth.

Terence O'Rourke and the boys willingly join the expedition, and the *Brilliant* sets out for the East. They are attacked by a pirate junk, which they succeed in overcoming, and they capture a Malay who proves to be Kwala, the thief.

The *Brilliant* reaches its destination, and near Sunshine Island a burly castaway is picked up who professes to be the only survivor from a ship burnt at sea. On the same evening Kwala escapes. Later in the night Austin and Clive are rowing near the island in a small boat, when they observe the *Brilliant* making for the open sea. Convinced that something is wrong they row to cut her off.

CHAPTER X.—(*Continued*)

THE BATTLE FOR THE SCHOONER

THE boys bent to their oars with a will, and, pulling with long, silent strokes, sent the boat gliding swiftly across the lagoon towards the gap in the reef.

The schooner, slipping along at not more than five knots, hardly gained upon them, and was still a mere blur in the soft darkness when Clive and Austin gained the reef.

"Back water!" came Austin's whispered order. "That'll do. Let her come in quietly. We don't want to stave her."

As he spoke he sprang to his feet, and taking the painter nimbly jumped for the rocks, landing on a rough slab of coral just above the water's edge.

"Come on, Clive," he said. "Sharp as you can. There's no time to waste."

"What can we do?" asked Clive, in a tone of despair. "We can't stop her."

"We're going to have a jolly good shot at it," returned Austin, between clenched teeth. "Follow me, and be careful not to show yourself against the sky."

They had run the boat in quite close to the passage through the reef. Austin made the rope fast to a jagged point of coral, and then started off climbing along the reef with wonderful speed and swiftness towards the very edge of the gap.

He had noticed earlier in the day that on the side of the passage was a peak of rock which rose to a height of seven or eight feet, and absolutely overhung the channel.

He gained the foot of this, and waited for Clive.

"Are you game for a big jump, old chap?" he asked.

"You mean aboard the schooner?" answered Clive sensing Austin's plan.

"Just so. It's our only chance of saving her; if, as I suspect, she's been stolen."

"I'm game," said Clive, quietly.

Austin gripped his friend's hand.

"It's going to be a tough job, old man. And we don't stand a dog's chance if we miss the deck."

"That's all right. We won't miss it," replied Clive. And there was a ring in his voice which made Austin feel confident that, whatever happened, his chum would not fail him.

"Crouch down. Don't let them see you," he said. "Our only chance is to take the beggars by surprise."

Clive nodded, and obeyed.

The schooner was now very close. The boys could see her plainly, with the phosphorescent ripples curling under her forefoot. She was making straight for the passage at a steady five knots.

There was someone at the wheel, but who it was there was not light enough to tell. For the rest her decks seemed to be empty and deserted.

"There must be two at least," whispered Clive in Austin's ear. "They must have someone in the engine-room."

"Wish I knew who it was at the wheel," replied Austin. "If it's that big beggar we've got our work cut out for us."

The bow of the schooner was now less than a cable's length from the passage. The boys crept forward to the very edge of the rock, and crouched ready for the spring.

Beneath them the long Pacific swells rolled inwards in great heaving mounds of water, but the weather had been so calm during the past week that the surf was far less dangerous than usual, and there was no risk whatever for the schooner, so long as her steersman kept her head straight.

Austin quivered with eagerness, like a greyhound on the leash, as he watched the schooner's rapid approach.

Next moment her bows entered the passage, and she curtseyed deeply to the swing of the first wave.

Clive made a quick movement, but Austin seized his arm and steadied him. He waited till the foremast was opposite them, and the beautiful little vessel, dipping again, lay right below them, and so close that they could almost have touched her port rail.

"Now!" he cried.

And as the words left his lips and the schooner began to rise again to the second swell, he and Clive together jumped with all their might.

So perfectly had Austin timed his effort that they both just cleared the rail, and landed almost simultaneously on the schooner's deck.

The shock flung them both forward on hands and knees; but they were up in an instant, and side by side dashed straight for the wheel.

A cry of rage and terror burst from the lips of the man who was steering, a curious, hoarse, guttural sound which instantly betrayed his identity.

"Kwala!" cried Austin, aloud, and, filled with blind rage that this little reptile, whom they had twice spared, should dare to try to ruin them in this dastardly fashion, he fairly hurled himself at the man.

Although he had seen the boys spring aboard, the Malay had not ventured to let go the wheel, for he knew that if he did so the schooner would at once broach-to, and, flung athwart the passage by the next roller, be hopelessly wrecked.

But now, as a gleam from the binnacle lamp showed him the vengeful light in Austin's eyes, he gave a second shout, and, letting go the spokes, his right hand flashed to his knife.

Austin was just too quick. Before the Malay could release the crooked blade of his kreese from its scabbard, the young Englishman's fist struck him between the eyes, and sent him spinning backwards all across the deck till he fetched up with a crash against the starboard rail.

This saved him from falling, and, spinning round, he raced forward, screaming like a mad monkey.

"Take the wheel, Clive!" shouted Austin, as he tore away in pursuit.

Luckily, Clive had done so already. If he had not, the *Brilliant* would certainly have been smashed against the sharp coral teeth which jutted out on either side of the passage.

The Malay made straight for the forward hatch, which, Austin saw, was wide open, and reaching it with Austin at his very heels, literally hurled himself down it.

There was a heavy thud, followed by a crash as though some weighty body had fallen from a considerable height into the hold below.

A roar of rage was followed by a shrill scream.

Austin waited to hear no more, but slammed down the hatch, and drove the bolt into its

staple. Then turning like a flash he ran hard down the deck to make equally sure of the after hatch.

"Got 'em both!" he shouted triumphantly to Clive, as he shot home the bolt of the after hatch.

"Who's the other?" demanded Clive.

"I didn't see him; but ten to one it's the big brute who calls himself Burnett. He made as much row as a sack of coals when he fell back into the hold."

"Did you knock him back?"

"No; Kwala did that for me," chuckled Austin. "The Malay took a flying leap down the hatch just as Burnett was coming up, and they went down together. Must have jolly near slain 'em both."

"I only hope it did," answered Clive, vengefully. "What's next? We're safe outside the reef; but I don't suppose you're anxious to go for a midnight cruise. And, anyhow, we shall be in a beastly hole if the engine stops."

"That's true. And you may jolly well bet that, if Burnett isn't too badly damaged to get back to the engine-room, he'll shut her down in short order. Best thing will be to turn her round at once, and get back into the lagoon. With any luck we'll do it before the engine runs down."

Clive nodded, and began vigorously spinning the spokes. He had taken regular spells at the wheel on the way out from home, and could steer as well as any of the *Brilliant's* crew.

"And I'll fire a gun," went on Austin. "It'll wake 'em up on the island, if they haven't yet found out what's up."

As the schooner swung, and, with the tide behind her, headed back through the surf to the channel, Austin quickly pulled the tarpaulin off the small, muzzle-loading signal-gun aft, and lighting a match put it to the touch-hole.

There was a bright flash, and a loud bang echoed away across the sleeping lagoon, rousing strange echoes from the distant island.

Almost instantly the bang was followed by five sharp reports in succession from the bows of the vessel, and Austin, with a cry of alarm, ran forward.

As he came in sight of the forward hatch he saw what had happened. Someone had clambered up the ladder, and with bullets from a heavy-bored pistol blown away the bolt.

Furious with himself for not foreseeing such a proceeding on the part of the prisoners, Austin rushed recklessly forward in the hope of flinging his weight upon the hatch-cover before the prisoners could escape.

He was just too late. The heavy hatch door was flung back as lightly as though it had been a mere toy, and the giant figure of Burnett shot out from the opening.

In his huge right hand he gripped a great 48-calibre navy revolver, his dark, sinister face was stained with blood which oozed from a cut on his forehead, and his deep-set eyes glowed red, like those of an angry wild beast.

"Ye young fool! Did ye think ye'd tricked me?" he rasped out, with a strong American accent. "Come another foot, and see what happens."

As he spoke he raised the pistol so that Austin was looking down its grim, black muzzle.

On the face of it, it was certain death to advance. But clearly imprinted in Austin's mind was the recollection that he had heard five shots fired.

Most pistols are five-chambered, only a few are six. Burnett certainly had had no time to reload.

Like a flash Austin made up his mind to take his chances, and with hardly a second's pause he dashed in.

Ah, he was right! Burnett did not even pull the trigger. Instead, he hurled the heavy weapon with all his force full at Austin's head.

If it had hit him it would have killed him just as surely as a bullet. But Austin saw the backward movement of Burnett's hand in time, and ducked. As the revolver hurtled past and crashed against the deck-house just behind them Austin's outflung arms caught Burnett round the waist.

Austin was a youngster of very powerful build, and his muscles had been hardened by the steady drill and the course of Japanese exercises which Heritage had put him through on the way out. He was not as tall as Burnett by five or six inches, and in anything like a stand-up fight he would not have stood a ghost of a chance.

But here he scored immensely in the fact that Burnett had never for one moment expected him to dash in as he had. The big man had been confident of bluffing him off, and Austin's desperate rush took him entirely by surprise.

He went staggering backwards across the deck, which here was comparatively narrow.

Before he knew it he was against the rail. Austin saw his advantage, and his heart leaped. Putting out all his energies he flung all his twelve stone of weight forward, at the same

time twisting his left leg behind Burnett's right one.

Reeling and almost off his balance Burnett tried to shift his grip, and get Austin round the body.

Before he could do so the rail caught him across the hips just below the waist, and with a bellow of rage he went right over backwards.

Even then he was quick enough to crook his knees on the rail, and save himself from going overboard. But it was no time for squeamishness, and Austin, seizing him by the feet, gave one vigorous lift and shove.

Next instant there was a heavy splash alongside, and the giant vanished head foremost into the salt water.

It was all over in a matter of seconds. So quickly, indeed, that as Austin turned he saw Kwala only just emerging from the hatch.

Austin's blood was up. Instead of any alarm he had nothing but contempt for the wretched little Malay. With a ringing shout he charged full at him.

This recklessness came very near to costing him his life. The Malay's right hand drew back, and something that hissed like a snake hurtled through the air.

Austin felt the wind of it on his cheek as it passed, heard a sharp thud as the kreese's keen point sunk deep into the deck behind him and remained there quivering.

Then he was on the Malay.

But Kwala had no stomach for fight. He had seen the end of Austin's encounter with the great Burnett, and the sight had filled him with incredulous terror. If he had kept his head and his kreese Austin would have been at his mercy, but now that he was weaponless his vicious little soul was filled with deadly terror, and he spun round and ran for his life.

He reached the rail, with Austin not a foot behind him, and with a shriek of terror hurled himself into the sea.

Austin saw him strike the water and vanish, but as he watched the man rose again to the surface and began swimming strongly for the reef.

For a moment Austin had a strong impulse to run down to the arms' rack, fetch a rifle, and put a bullet through the ugly bullet head. He had the strongest presentiment that he had not seen the last of the little reptile. But he felt that he could not shoot a defenceless man; the impulse passed, and he turned away sharply and walked down the deck to where Clive, with his face drawn with anxiety on his chum's account, was still at the wheel.

"Thank goodness you're all right!" exclaimed Clive, in tones of deepest relief. "When Burnett put that pistol to your head I made up my mind you were done for."

"I knew it was empty," answered Austin. "He'd fired his five cartridges. But it was a bit of luck my getting him over the rail. Once he'd got those great paws of his on me I'd have been as helpless as a baby. However, it's all right now, and here we are safe again in the lagoon. Tumble below, and see to the engine, old chap, and I'll steer her in."

Much to his surprise, for he knew that the signal-gun must have roused them, Austin saw no sign of any boat putting out from the landing.

It was not until he had got the *Brilliant* safe at her moorings, and he and Clive had launched the dinghy and pulled ashore that he discovered the reason.

Heritage, O'Rourke, and John Pagan met him on the beach, and in reply to their eager questions he told them what had happened.

Heritage gave a sigh of relief when he heard that the schooner was safe and uninjured.

"You've done excellently well, Chesney," he said, in his deep, quiet voice. "I am proud of you and Denham."

As for O'Rourke, he gave Austin a smack on the back which nearly knocked the breath out of him.

"Begor, but it's you that's the broth of a bhoy!" he exclaimed. "And 'twas mesilf missed all the fun, slaping like a tortoise whin I ought to have been awake."

"Didn't you hear the gun?" asked Austin.

"Yes," said Heritage. "That was what roused us. But when we got down to the beach we found that every boat had been staved, so it was impossible to follow you."

"The boats staved?" repeated Austin, in amazement.

"Yes, every one of them," replied Heritage, grimly. "That ruffian Burnett must have done it before he started."

"But I don't understand," said Austin. "You had the usual guard posted."

"Yes. But one is dead, stabbed by the Malay's knife, and the other is lying in the hospital with a cracked head. It is owing to you that the two scoundrels have paid the penalty of their crimes."

"But I don't know whether they have," replied Austin, quickly. "Kwala was swimming like a good 'un when I last saw him. Probably he and Burnett have both reached the reef."

Heritage started, and in the lantern light Austin saw his face set grimly.

"Then we'll be after them," he said, sharply. "At once, please, gentlemen."

In a very few minutes they were again aboard the schooner. The moorings were cast off, Clive started up the engine, and at her full seven knots the *Brilliant* glided back towards the reef, where an armed party was landed and a thorough search made.

Austin, scrambling across the saw-toothed rocks, came to the place where he had left his boat.

It was gone.

"That settles it," he said to O'Rourke, who was with him. "They've collared the boat and skipped out."

"Deed, I'm thinking you're right," growled back the big Irishman. "And wid the hour's start they've got there'll be about as much chance of catching thim as of finding a squeal in a dead pig. We'll tell the captain, but I doubt he'll thry to follow."

O'Rourke was right. Captain Heritage gave as his opinion that pursuit was useless, and once more the schooner's bow was turned towards her moorings.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE DEPTHS OF THE LAGOON

"LOOKS easy, doesn't it?" said Austin, as he and Clive, peering over the gunwale of the boat, watched the diver at work below them.

His body, monstrous in its huge diving suit of thick rubber, and crowned with a great, ball-shaped copper helmet, was curiously foreshortened as he moved quickly along the bottom, scooping the "shell" from the floor of the lagoon, and the long blue sea grass swayed beneath his lead-soled boots at each step he took.

From the valve in his helmet a steady stream of silver bubbles rose flashing through

"Come another foot, and see what happens!" roared the huge pirate, as Austin dashed forward.

the marvellously clear water and burst on the surface, while just behind the boys the wheel of the air-pump turned steadily with a slight chugging sound.

"Faith, it's easy enough at that depth," replied O'Rourke, who had been standing just behind Austin, and had overheard his words. "'Tis not more than five fathoms where the chap is working. But wait till ye go to fifteen, aye, and twenty. I'm thinking 'tis a different story then."

"How deep can a chap go?" asked Clive.

"There's mighty few can stand the pressure at more than twenty-five fathoms," replied the Irishman. "But now and then ye'll find a man that'll go deeper and take no harm. Thirty-two fathoms was the record for a long while. 'Twas Lambert did that. But they tell me he was beat by the young Frenchman De Plury. 'Tis said he went to sixty-six fathoms."

"Three hundred and thirty-six feet!" exclaimed Clive. "Why, the pressure must have been something awful. I wonder it didn't crush him flat."

"'Tisn't the pressure kills," explained O'Rourke. "'Tis coming up to the top too quick—that's what does the harm. The big change gives ye diver's palsy, and that's what kills most divers."

"What's the use of going so deep?" asked Austin.

"Faith, all the best shell lies at or about twenty-five fathoms," explained O'Rourke. "And there's a dale that's below that, so dape that even thim dare-devil Filipinos daren't thry for it."

"I'd like to go down myself," said Austin, suddenly.

O'Rourke glanced at him sharply.

"Have ye iver been inside a diving-suit before?" he asked.

"Yes, several times. When our tin mine was flooded I went down twice, and another time I had a Fleuss dress on, and went down into a gallery which was full of water to get out the body of a poor chap that was drowned."

"'Deed thin, ye ought to be fit to have a thry in the lagoon," returned O'Rourke. "I'll spake to the captain to-night, and av he says yis, ye shall take a turn to-morrow."

O'Rourke was as good as his word, and as Heritage made no objection, Austin had a suit on the very next morning, and after a little practice showed that he would soon be as useful as any of the professionals.

The pile of pearl shells grew apace, for work went on from dawn till dark.

The first task in the morning was to search the previous day's take for pearls. The shells were opened and cleared out, the body of the fish being carefully examined, for the best pearls are usually found embedded in its soft substance. The shell itself was also carefully scrutinised, and if there were any blisters on its surface these were opened and examined, for pearls are sometimes found buried in the coat of mother-of-pearl.

Sometimes hundreds of shells would be cleaned out without a single pearl being found; at other times a dozen good pearls would be taken out of one heap, and three or four score of little seed pearls besides. Very occasionally three or even four pearls would be found in a single oyster.

But even when no pearls were found the party had the consolation of knowing that their labour was not entirely lost, for the shells themselves were worth money. They are used for making pearl buttons, studs, and ornaments, and fetch ninety to a hundred pounds a ton. It takes from twelve to seventeen hundred shells to weigh a ton, and so thickly was the bed of the lagoon covered with the oysters that sometimes the pile grew by nearly half a ton a day.

In spite of the speed at which they worked, Heritage's face remained grave, and he was very silent when they gathered at the evening meal.

"It's fretting the masther is," explained O'Rourke to the boys. "Ye see the lease is but for two years, and wan year is mighty nigh gone already. He's thinking that he'll niver get the half of what lays in the bottom of the lagoon, and wid him 'tis neck or nothing. What wud be fortune to you or me is no use to him at all, wid the dhream he's got of building the big ship."

"But I thought the Japanese people would grant him a renewal of his lease," said Austin.

"Maybe they would if they didn't know more than it's likely they know now," replied the big Irishman.

Austin looked puzzled.

"I don't understand," he said.

"'Tis this way. Whin they granted him the lease they hadn't any more notion than you or I what they were giving away. But it's mighty onlikely that it hasn't come to their ears by this time. And seeing that the Jap's about the canniest business man ye cud meet

in a lifetime, I'm thinking that they'll not give the captain one day more than they have to."

Austin nodded.

"Now I see. Well, the only thing will be to wire-in like fury and get all the spoil we can out of the place. What a pity it is we can't tell just where the best shell lies."

"Now ye spake of that," said O'Rourke, "ye remind me that while I was fishing last evening I found a mighty deep hole close by th' reef. I'm thinking it may hould good shell."

"Let's try it to-morrow," said Austin, eagerly.

"I'm doubting ye will get to the bottom," said O'Rourke.

"We can but try. I'm game to have a shot at it. If it's too deep, why, you'll just have to yank me up again."

"Sure, 'twould be foine if we cud give th' captain a raal leg up," said O'Rourke. "Say nothing to any of thim, Misther Chesney, and you and I and Misther Denham will take a little prospecting thrip to-morrow morning."

* * * * *

It was barely six o'clock when the little party reached the spot which O'Rourke had spoken of. It was round at the back of the island, and close to the reef, across which the rising tide was rushing in a snarl of white surf.

There was no wind, and inside the barrier the lagoon lay like a great mirror, its surface gilded by the rays of the new-risen sun.

O'Rourke and Clive had been pulling, Austin on his knees in the bows, with his head over the side watching the bottom.

"Here's the pit," he said, suddenly. "Back water. We shall have to anchor on the ledge. It's too deep beyond."

The oar-blades dipped deep, the way of the boat was checked at once, and the kedge was dropped so neatly that it caught on the upper edge of the bank while the stern of the boat swung over the deep pit.

Austin quickly got into the diving-suit, O'Rourke screwed on his great copper helmet, the ladder was flung over, the air-pump started, and Austin began his descent.

A certain thrill of excitement ran through his veins as he dropped rung by rung through the translucent green depths. Blue as the water appeared upon the surface, the light turned to green as soon as he was below.

A diver must descend slowly, so as to let his body become accustomed to the rapid alteration in pressure. So Austin had plenty of time to observe the beauties which surrounded him.

The tropic sun-rays, piercing the exquisite emerald depths, revealed beauties such as no land garden can show. The warm water teemed with life. Gay coloured fishes shot in and out of a tangled growth of gigantic weeds. Life swarmed on every side, from tiny creatures smaller than the head of a pin to great crabs and other sea beasts monstrous in shape and terrifying in appearance.

Across the thick glass of his helmet floated dozens of jellyfish, their thread-like tentacles quivering as they swam. The first time Austin had been down he had not been able to resist the feeling that these creatures would actually strike his face with their slender stinging rays. But now he was well accustomed to them, and his only care was to avoid their fastening upon his hands, the one exposed portion of his body.

There was no nervousness about Austin. He had perfect faith in his sound, well-tested suit, and in his mates above, Clive at the rope, one end of which was round his body, O'Rourke at the pump which sent the fresh air down to him in steady gushes.

For defence against shark or ray—which, however, seldom venture to attack a man in diving-dress—he carried at his belt a heavy diver's knife, double edged, sharp as a razor, and with a blade fifteen inches in length.

On this occasion he was also equipped with a small but powerful electric lamp, which was fixed upon the front of his helmet, and supplied by an electric battery secured around his neck.

In a few minutes he had reached the top of the ledge. Behind him lay the rough, but moderately level, bottom of the lagoon where the water was no more than thirty to forty feet deep; in front yawned the deep chasm which O'Rourke had discovered.

Austin stopped a moment and looked over, and for all his pluck felt a slight sensation of awe. The pit was so deep and so wide that he could neither see the bottom nor the far side. There was nothing but a vaguely translucent, greenish dusk in which dim forms, some vaguely phosphorescent, moved to and fro.

"Won't do to look down into that too long," he grinned to himself, "I might get giddy."

And feeling with his lead-shod feet for the rungs of his rope ladder, he continued his descent into the depths.

As he went downwards the light decreased. He counted the rungs. Ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty. He began to fear that the ladder would not be long enough to reach the bottom.

But at the forty-third step from the edge of the pit his left foot struck firm ground, and

switching on his lamp he cautiously relaxed his hold on the ladder, and stepped off on to the bottom.

Looking upwards he could just see the boat poised so far above him that it looked like a mere toy. The bubbles from the valve in his helmet rose like silver streaks to the surface.

On one side the rock wall rose abruptly. It was coated with a hanging tangle of strange sea-growths, mostly of a dull yellow or livid green colour. The vivid pinks and scarlets did not show in these greater depths. And this rock wall was hollowed out along its base into a series of shallow caves.

Leaning forward he flung his light out across the floor of the pit.

This was level and sandy. Clumps of sea-grass rose here and there, waving in the faint currents which move even in the depths, and branching corals grew among the clumps. But Austin took little note of these. Oysters were the object of his search, and he had not gone six steps before he came upon a sight which made him gasp.

A space the size of the floor of a large room was literally carpeted with the largest, finest shell which he had ever set eyes upon.

He stooped and tore one loose, and lifting it turned his lamp upon it. It was the true golden tip, and nearly a foot across.

Gasping slightly with excitement, Austin pulled his basket into position and set to work to fill it. The shell was so thick that all he had to do was to kneel down, and, without moving so much as a yard, tear up oyster after oyster and stow them in the basket.

Their size filled him with amazement. The first, instead of being exceptional, proved rather below than above the average, and presently he pulled up one which was at least eighteen inches in diameter, and weighed, as far as he could judge, the better part of seven or eight pounds.

At this rate it took only a matter of two or three minutes to fill his basket, and he was in the act of rising to his feet when suddenly, and without the slightest warning, he felt a grip like that of a man's hand settle on his left shoulder.

CHAPTER XII

THE MASTER OF THE PEARL PIT

THE shock brought Austin's heart to his throat. But it was nothing to the shudder of loathing which seized him when, starting round, he saw what it was that held him.

A slender, snake-like thing, pale in colour, and speckled with small, livid spots, and armed on the lower side with cup-like suckers which held like steel.

There was no need to tell him what creature owned this awful weapon. It was a cuttle-fish.

Instinctively Austin's right hand flashed to his knife. He drew it swiftly from its scabbard, and with one sharp stroke slashed off the clinging tentacle.

The raw stump shrank back, writhing, and Austin sprang back, at the same time signalling wildly to be hauled up.

But at that instant another livid tentacle darted out of the gloom under the rock-face, and fastened with a vice-like grip upon his left leg.

There came a tug at the rope, and he was drawn clear of the bottom. This made it impossible for him to reach the arm that now held him with his knife, and he realised that in a moment he would be the centre of a tug-of-war which could only result in one way. His companions in the boat could by no manner of means be a match for the unseen monster which lurked in the hollow under the rock-face.

Cold fear clutched his heart, but he retained sufficient presence of mind to signal swiftly to be dropped again.

The signal was obeyed, and he dropped, as luck would have it, almost astride of a thick trunk of coral which grew to a height of some five feet, and which he instinctively gripped with his left arm.

Next instant came a jerk so sudden and terrible from the tentacle which had seized his left leg that he felt as though he were being torn in half.

The pain was exquisite, and if Austin had not managed to make a rapid slash and free himself he would have fainted from the agony.

Once more he strove to back away, but now the green dusk was full of writhing arms, and two more fell upon him, one clutching his right shoulder, the other gripping him round the body.

This was no ordinary octopus which was attacking Austin. An octopus has but eight arms. His foe was a true cuttle-fish—one of those monstrous, ten-armed squids which are the scourge and terror of the greater depths, and are a match for the shark or even for the swordfish.

But for the friendly coral stump Austin must have been instantly dragged in towards the gaping mouth which waited to devour him.

Desperately Austin waged war with his monstrous enemy, but his strength failed under the fearful strain. The tentacles encompassed him in a greater grip, and he realised he was helpless.

The stump, however, saved him for the moment, for he got his body athwart it, and his gigantic enemy must either tear him to pieces or pull the tough growth from its solid base.

The grip on his right shoulder hampered him terribly, but still he did not lose his presence of mind. Rapidly changing his knife from his right hand to his left, he sliced away the clutching tentacle from his shoulder, and then, once more getting the knife in his right hand, attacked the arm which held his waist.

But this was thicker, and its toughness made it impossible to cut with a single slash.

Before he could hew it through three more of the horrible things laid hold upon him, two by the legs, one round the body.

The point of the latter tentacle lay just in the centre of his chest, and a sick shudder seized the boy as he saw that its tip was gone. It was one of those which he had cut through already.

The conviction that his monstrous enemy was utterly insensible to pain gave Austin a worse shock than anything yet, and for the moment he was near to despair.

But there was no time to think, and he slashed away with a mad and desperate fury.

His blade began to blunt upon the leathery tendrils, and his strength to fail under the fearful strain. He realised that his moments were numbered, yet still he clung to his coral stump, and made frantic play with his knife.

So far he had seen nothing of his ghastly enemy except its attacking suckers. Suddenly the rays of his lamp were reflected in two great oval lenses like pools of ink, and with a shudder of loathing he saw a vast, bloated, shapeless bulk, as large as the body of a carthorse, slowly advancing towards him out of the black shadow under the foot of the rock-wall.

The gigantic, unblinking eyes glared straight at him. Their owner was coming out of his retreat to see what sort of creature was giving him so much trouble.

The colossal size and nightmare appearance of the terrible denizen of the sea-caves almost paralysed Austin. But only for a second or two. Then a mad fury seized him, and he hacked and sliced with a frantic strength that he did not know himself to possess.

But though he did not realise it, this was the last effort of his overtaxed brain and muscles. For the past five minutes he had been undergoing a strain beyond the strength of mortal man.

All of a sudden something seemed to snap within his head, and the strength went out of him. Like a flash, one of the long, waving tentacles of the cuttle swirled down upon his right arm and pinned it, rendering him entirely helpless.

He could no longer struggle. All that he could do was to cling to his rock, and watch the loathsome shape of his gigantic enemy moving steadily nearer.

Those awful eyes fascinated him. He could not take his own off them. Beneath them he saw the vast, thin-lipped mouth opening and shutting in horrible anticipation.

A vague wonder came to him as to whether Clive and O'Rourke realised what was happening, and tearing his gaze away for an instant from the approaching monster he glanced swiftly up at the little oval shape which was the boat floating high above him in the sunlight on the surface of the lagoon.

As he did so a long, dark bulk shot suddenly like a cloud between him and the surface, cutting off his view of the boat.

He felt his rope vibrate as some heavy object brushed against it.

But wonder as well as other emotions were almost exhausted. After all, it mattered little whether it was shark or ray, or what other monster of the deep.

So Austin thought. He had never heard of the "killer," as the whalemen call the grampus, the *orca gladiator*, fiercest and boldest fighter of all the sea creatures, or if he had heard of it he knew nothing of its pluck or peculiar qualities.

Therefore he could hardly believe his senses when, without the slightest warning, the crushing weight of the cuttle's huge tentacles fell away from him, and left him breathless, weak as a child, yet free.

So amazed was he that it did not even occur to him to give the signal to be hauled up, but stil clung to his coral pillar, and watched in dumb astonishment while the cuttle, trailing its wounded tentacles behind it, wobbled rapidly back towards the cavern from which it had emerged.

Rapidly, but not fast enough to escape the fury of the "killer." Like a black avalanche the great fish shot downwards, and drove torpedo-fashion straight at the vast, pallid bulk of the cuttle.

Though the diver is deaf inside his thick copper helmet, yet Austin almost believed that he could hear the crunch as the killer's great conical teeth met in the leathery body of the cuttle, and shore away a hundredweight or so

of its substance as easily as a steam-shovel cuts clay.

The cuttle's tentacles rose whirling, and fixed upon the killer's black shining body. The killer cared not at all. It was twenty feet long, and had the strength of three elephants in its torpedo-shaped body. With another terrific snap it bit off two tentacles at the roots; then it bored straight in at the head of its prey, and the water darkened as a mist of sand rose, and hid the titanic combat.

Then, and not till then, Austin realised that he was free. He gave the signal to haul, and a few moments later was hauled safely over the side of the boat, and fell in a limp heap into the bottom.

Clive and O'Rourke had his dress and helmet off in about the quickest time on record.

At sight of his chum's face Clive went white.

"He's dead!" he groaned.

"He's not dead," replied O'Rourke. "But by the look of him 'tis an ugly time he's been having. See, he's opening his eyes. Give me the brandy till I put a dhrop down the throat of him."

The strong spirit brought a little colour back to Austin's grey cheeks, and he stared round wildly.

Then suddenly he seized hold of O'Rourke's big, horny hand, and clutched it as though he needed the feel of warm human flesh to help him realise that he was at last in safety.

"Ye poor spalpeen," said O'Rourke, with unusual feeling, "'tis a terrible time ye've been having. Can ye tell us about it?"

"Let's get back first," muttered Austin, with a strong shiver.

O'Rourke motioned to Clive, the two quickly hauled up the kedge, and as they pulled back across the sunlit surface of the lagoon Austin told them of his awful experience in the black depths of the Pearl Pit.

* * * * *

Austin was in bed for the best part of a week after his battle with the great cuttle. His whole body was black and blue, and he could bear no one to touch him except Sundra, the Kanaka, who massaged him daily with his long, slim, brown fingers.

And at night he would wake over and over again, bathed in perspiration after ghastly dreams in which the strangling coils of the sea monster were round him again.

But by degrees his fine constitution reasserted itself, and within ten days he was out and about, his own vigorous self again.

Although his basket of shell had been lost in his battle with the great cuttle, yet the story of the riches he had discovered in the depths of the Pearl Pit had fired the others with wild enthusiasm, and half a dozen men had volunteered to risk the perils of the pit.

After consultation with O'Rourke and Pagan Captain Heritage had a submarine mine made out of a barrel filled with explosives, and towing this out sunk it in the centre of the pit, and fired it by means of an electric wire.

A huge fountain of white water leaped into the air, and hundreds of fish and other sea creatures were found floating on the surface, but there was no sign of any cuttle or octopus among them.

Feeling pretty certain that the tremendous shock would have driven out any relations of the brute which had tackled Austin, supposing any more to exist in the rock caves, Heritage then permitted his divers to go down, and the harvest of shell taken on the first day was three times greater than that of the best previous day.

What was more, these great golden-tip oysters were particularly rich in pearls, and within a week the stock which Heritage kept locked within his safe increased by the estimated value of fifty thousand pounds.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HUNTED SHIP

"I'M going to send the schooner to Hong, Kong next week," announced Heritage at supper one evening about three months after the discovery of the Pearl Pit.

The other four stopped eating, and looked up sharply.

"What will ye be doing that for, captain dear?" asked O'Rourke.

"Because I don't like to risk keeping such a quantity of pearls here on the island," answered Heritage. "I reckon we have nearly a quarter of a million pounds' worth in the safe, to say nothing of the shell, and I confess that I should sleep happier of nights if I knew they were in the strong room of the Eastern Companies' Bank."

John Pagan nodded gravely.

"I think you're right, captain. There's always the chance of these Black Flag gentry swooping down upon us again. And next time they'll come in big force. To tell you the truth, I've been a bit surprised they haven't done so before now, for they must know well enough what we're after."

"Perhaps they haven't forgotten their reception at your hands last time," remarked Heritage, with a smile.

"They wouldn't worry much about that, sir, if they thought there was any chance of success. Human life is cheap in these seas."

"It's Burnett & Co. I've been expecting," put in Austin. "I don't suppose there's any doubt that Burnett's castaway dodge was a regular plant to get him ashore here in order to spy out the land."

"None whatever, my boy," replied Heritage. "We must only hope that he and the Malay failed to reach their friends or accomplices."

"I'm not thinking there's much doubt that they did, captain," said O'Rourke, gravely. "They had a sound boat beneath them, the weather was fine, and there's plinty of islands they cud have reached widin a couple of days."

"Well, at any rate I shall send the pearls off as soon as I can," said Heritage. "The typhoon season is coming on, and I want the *Brilliant* to make the trip before the weather breaks. She ought to do it there and back in less than a week, and meantime we'll carry on the work as fast as we can. We've no time to waste, for there'll be many days coming when the boats won't be able to go out."

Boom!

The glass in the windows rattled, and the whole frame of the light building quivered.

Everyone in the room sprang to his feet.

"A gun!" muttered Heritage.

"And a big one, sorr!" added O'Rourke, making for the door.

There was still plenty of light, for it was summer now, and the sun had only just set, and the first thing they saw was a small steamer approaching the island at full speed. The cloud of black smoke which rolled from her single funnel, and extended in a long, dark line behind her, showed that she was running under forced draught.

A couple of miles behind her was a second vessel of a very different type. A long, low craft, resembling one of the gunboats which are used for patrolling the shallow waters and the big rivers of the African and East Asiatic coasts.

The latter was also travelling at full speed. Apparently she was faster than the first, and was steadily overhauling her.

Heritage clapped his binoculars to his eyes, and quickly focussed them.

"The first is flying Japanese colours," he said, sharply. "The other has no flag at all."

"But she manes mischief, sorr," returned O'Rourke. "Watch that, will ye?"

As he spoke a little ball of white vapour leaped from the bows of the second vessel, and they saw a spurt of white foam rise from the sea close to the side of the first vessel. A moment later the heavy report of the gun reached their ears.

"Pipe all hands!" shouted Heritage. "Tumble aboard as quick as you can. It's time we took a hand in this game."

Already the whole camp was astir. The men, roused by the sound of the guns, had gathered along the stockade, and were eagerly watching the strange sight.

The moment that they heard the trill of O'Rourke's silver whistle each man was off at a run for the beach. In an incredibly short time they were in the boats, and, pulling out to the *Brilliant*, tumbled aboard her in a desperate hurry, and began casting off her moorings.

They needed no urging. Old bluejackets almost to a man, the prospect of a fight excited them to the utmost of their powers, and it is safe to say that a vessel was never got under way more rapidly than was the schooner.

What breeze there was was off-shore, and in a few moments the schooner, with every sail drawing and her motor engine working at its topmost speed, was flying out across the lagoon at fully ten knots, while on her deck a dozen stout fellows under Austin's direction were busily uncovering the guns and bringing up ammunition.

By this time the chase was within a mile or so of the reef, and heading for the channel.

Her pursuer was rapidly closing up, and had fired twice more, but apparently without hitting the other vessel.

With her skipper himself at the wheel, the *Brilliant* ran straight out through the opening in the reef, and plunging heavily in the surf cleared it, and was headed straight for the small steamer.

The latter began to signal vehemently.

The *Brilliant's* signal-man brought the message to Heritage.

"Japanese Government vessel, sir," he said, touching his forelock. "Chased by unknown gunboat. Asks assistance."

"Signal her to run inside the reef. We'll look after the pirate."

At this moment the gunboat fired again, and this time her shot went home. The *Brilliant's* crew heard the crash as the shell struck the Jap,

and saw a cloud of smoke and splinters lift from her stern.

She staggered, but continued her course for the opening in the reef.

"That's a bigger gun than anything we've got," said Heritage to O'Rourke who was standing beside him.

"It is, sorr. But I'm thinking they're mighty poor shots wid it. 'Tis the first time they've hit the chase."

Heritage glanced at the gunboat. She was now little more than a mile away from the *Brilliant*.

"Tell Chesney to open fire," he said. "She's not armoured, and if he can hull her those high explosive shells ought to do a bit of damage."

O'Rourke hastened across to Austin, who, like the rest of the guns' crews, had been simply aching for the order.

The schooner's biggest weapons were only six pounders, but they were the newest and best of their kind. They were fitted with the very latest in sighting apparatus, and the shells they carried were filled with lyddite.

Austin, with one hand on the elevating screw, took a quick glance along the sights, his finger touched the button, and the loud smack of the report was followed by the shrill scream of the shell as it flashed away on its vengeful journey.

Next instant the gathering dusk was lit by a short, sharp blaze of flame.

The shell had struck the gunboat just forward of the funnel, and as the smoke cleared away the schooner's men raised a cheer, for a big hole gaped in the strange ship's side.

"Too high, and too far forward!" cried Heritage. "You must hull her, Chesney."

Austin bit his lip, and prepared to do better next time.

Meanwhile the schooner's second six-pounder came into action, but her shell went high, and all it did was to lift one of the pirate's boats out of its davits.

The moment that the *Brilliant* opened fire the strange vessel, abandoning her chase of the Japanese steamer, had swung round with the evident intention of bringing her broadside to bear on the schooner.

And just as the second shell from the schooner left the gun an answering crash came from the pirate, and a heavy projectile hurtled between the *Brilliant's* masts, dropped into the sea beyond and went ricochetting away across the smooth swells.

"Begor, if wan of thim gits aboard us there'll be throuble!" muttered O'Rourke, as he glanced back at the flying shell.

Austin, with his lips tight set, and his eyes narrowed to two lines, was staring along his sights. The short twilight of the sub-tropics was fast deepening, making accurate shooting extremely difficult.

At last he pressed the electric button.

The crash of the explosion had hardly died away before a shout of triumph rang along the deck of the *Brilliant*.

The shell had hit the base of the gunboat's funnel and carried the whole thing away. Her pace decreased at once, and they could see men swarming to repair the damage.

"Good for you, Misther Chesney!" exclaimed O'Rourke, in high delight. "'Twas a foine shot. Ye've crippled the spalpeens this time."

"It was pure luck," growled Austin. "I was aiming ten feet lower. I meant to hull her, as the captain ordered."

As he spoke the other six-pounder barked, and this time made a fair and square hit, knocking a big hole in the stern of their adversary.

But the luck was not to be all upon the schooner's side. The pirate's big gun roared again, and though as before the shell flew high, yet, as ill-luck would have it, it struck the *Brilliant's* fore-topmast, and carried it away.

It fell with a fearful crash, carrying away part of the standing rigging, and leaving a raffle of wreckage towing over the side.

Worse, a heavy block struck an A.B. named Jack Morris on the head, and stretched him insensible, and apparently dead, upon the deck.

"Clear that wreckage away. Open with the quick-firers!" came Heritage's ringing tones; and the men, enraged by the disaster, obeyed with a will.

The pirate was now in easy range of the Maxims, and a storm of the vicious little one-pound shells raked her fore and aft, exploding with fearful force as they struck her, wrecking her upper works, and doing fearful damage.

Shrieks and yells arose and echoed across the calm sea, and the gunboat at once put her helm up, turned tail, and scuttled away like a wounded duck.

Not a mother's son aboard the *Brilliant* but was eager to chase, but the damage to the rigging made this impossible, and in any case Heritage had no notion of risking his ship under their adversary's big gun. If one of those heavy shells hulled her she would in all probability be

done for, and it would be impossible to replace her without long delay.

So the schooner, too, turned, and followed the Japanese vessel, which had now safely negotiated the passage, and was steaming slowly across the lagoon.

"I wonder what she's doing in these seas?" said Heritage, thoughtfully, as he watched the other ship. "She's a Government vessel without doubt."

"Then bedad, sorr, they'd ought to be ashamed, sending an unarmed craft like that into these says. Sure, it was just inviting thim Black Flag gintry to help thimselves."

"You think that gunboat was a Black Flag?"

"I do, sorr. Things move here as they do iverywhere else, and ye can buy a craft like that, whin her Government has done wid her, for less than the price of a tramp steamer."

"It'll be a poor look-out for us if all these pirate fellows take to gunboats," said Heritage, with a crooked smile.

"All the more rayson for gitting thim pearls safe to Hong Kong, sorr," replied O'Rourke.

By the time the *Brilliant* reached her moorings the other steamer had anchored, and a boat was putting off for the shore. Heritage got into his gig, and was pulled at once to the beach. Naturally he was not anxious to have strangers about loose on the island.

The last rays of daylight had faded before he landed, but a brilliant moon had risen out of the eastern sea and flooded the calm lagoon and the snow-white strand with its silver light.

A little group of small but well-built men was waiting at the landing-place.

"Japs, right enough," said John Pagan, grimly, as he followed Heritage ashore. "I wonder what the little beggars are after."

Austin, who was beside him, was surprised at his tone.

"They're our allies, anyhow," he said.

Pagan grunted.

"I'm one of those that wish they weren't," he replied. "They're a sight too smart about business matters to please me, and they get the best of the bargain every time. I'd sooner deal with John Chinaman any day of the week."

One of the Japanese stepped forward as the white men approached. He was evidently a man of birth, for he was fairer than his companions; his hands and feet were small and delicate, and he wore a well-cut suit of European white drill.

He bowed politely.

"Captain Heritage, I believe?" he said, in perfect English.

"That is my name, sir," replied Heritage, with equal ceremony.

"I am Mr. Kusima, at your service," said the Japanese. "And I and my companions have to offer you our grateful thanks for the great service which you and your brave companions have just rendered us."

"We were fortunate in reaching the spot in time," said Heritage, with his pleasant smile. "But, if I may say so, it is risky to navigate these seas quite unarmed."

"We have one gun, Captain Heritage," replied the other. "Unfortunately it jammed at the critical moment, and we were forced to trust to our heels. We are fast enough to escape from any ordinary steamer, let alone a junk. The last thing that we expected was to find that Stark had got hold of a gunboat."

"Stark — who is he?" asked Heritage, quickly.

"Is it possible that you have not heard?" asked the other in surprise. "The wonder is that he has not attacked you before this."

"I assure you, we know nothing of him, Mr. Kusima. None of us have been off the island for months. He appears to be a pirate?"

"He is the chief of the Black Flags in these seas," explained the Japanese. "A renegade American, we believe, who has already given my Government endless trouble. He is a giant of a man—cunning, cruel, and unscrupulous."

"A giant!" repeated Heritage. "A fellow of about six foot four, with very high cheek-bones, and a face that looks as if it were carved out of solid mahogany?"

"Precisely," answered Mr. Kusima.

"Then we have seen him. Only we knew him under the name of Burnett."

"That is the man," said Kusima. "And a very dangerous neighbour, too. He is established at the present moment with his gang of cutthroats on Batol Island, which, as you know, is but a day's sail from here."

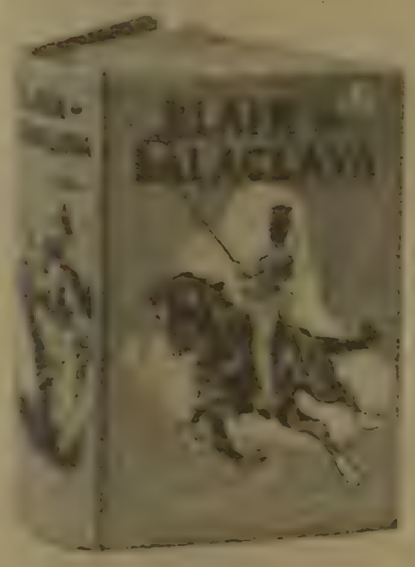
"I told you so," cried Austin. "I knew those were men whom I saw on the island."

"You were right, sir," said the Japanese, turning and speaking directly to Austin. "Though the island was supposed to be inaccessible Stark has apparently found not only a way up to the rocky summit, but also a harbour. There he is collecting a force for purposes best known to himself. One of them, I make no doubt, is a raid in force upon this island."

(Another long instalment of this thrilling story next month.)

"THE CAPTAIN" BOOK-SHELF

Blair of Balaclava. By Escott Lynn. (W. & R. Chambers, 6*s.*)—A story of the Crimea, so long as it is graphically told and is historically accurate, will never fail to interest the British boy. This story by Mr. Escott Lynn is certain to prove one of the most popular of the many splendid books that Messrs. Chambers have issued this year; and well it deserves to be, for it is seldom that so thrilling and at the same time so informative a work has been produced. Jack Blair has many tough experiences, but he always plays his part like a man, and wins through to the end—and his V.C.—in fine style. The author in his preface says that "The force which left England for the East was one of the worst-equipped and most badly organised that ever left our shores. On the contrary, the men of which it was composed were the finest." And he shows in his story that Jack Blair was one of the finest of them all. This book is to be heartily recommended, and a special word of praise must be spared for the six beautiful coloured illustrations by W. K. C. Groome.



When I was a Boy. By Lucas Beynon. (Geo. Routledge, 3*s.* 6*d.*)—If you want to read about life in the open, about fishing and swimming, squirrel hunting, bird-nesting, the use of catapults, about tracking white owls, and a score of other delights of the country, you should get this book. It is a very human story, and the healthy boy will like every line of it. It is very happily illustrated by Charles Robinson.

Jack Chaloner. By Edward Fraser. (Hutchinson & Co., 5*s.*)—Field-Marshal Earl Roberts has written a foreword to this magnificent book, and the recommendation that he gives it is bound to ensure it an unusual success. "This is a story full of stirring incident and picturesque adventure, well calculated to attract and hold the attention of youth, and to arouse and foster patriotic sentiments in the young man of this country," says Earl Roberts. "But exciting as is the narrative there is nothing in it that is exaggerated or impossible. . . . I think Mr. Fraser has written a readable, a healthy, and a useful story, and I hope it will be widely read."

The Story of Nelson. By H. F. B. Wheeler, F.R.Hist.S. (Harrap & Co., 3*s.* 6*d.* net.)—There is now a large Nelson literature (though no larger than the greatness of its hero deserves) covering every phase and period of the great sailor's career, but the present work must not therefore be branded as supererogatory. There may be in it nothing new, but it embodies the result of a research, more careful and complete than the average reader is able to make, among all existing sources of information. Nelson is every schoolboy's hero, and the admiration is as wholesome a one as could be chosen; his high regard

for duty, his constant chafing against inactivity, and his persistence and perfect fearlessness when in action are qualities worthy of entire emulation. "Duty is the great business of a sea officer," he wrote, and Nelson was emphatically the man of duty; but he was no martinet, and many a well-known anecdote illustrates his solicitude for the well-being of those of humbler rank in his charge. "Chaps that fought like the devil sit down and cry like a wench," was the tribute of one rough sailor after the fatal but victorious day of Trafalgar. The least that can be said of Mr. Wheeler's book is that, for the young man who desires a reliable and well-told epitome of the great admiral's life story, we are acquainted with no work that we can more readily recommend.

Messrs. Warne's Books.—If you are thinking of buying any books as Christmas presents for your younger brothers and sisters you cannot do better than select them from Messrs. Frederick Warne's list. Their booklet concerning their own publications, entitled "For the Children," will be sent you on application to Messrs. Frederick Warne & Co., Bedford Street, Strand, W.C. Volumes specially to be recommended for the younger folk are Kate Greenaway's and Ralph Caldecott's picture books, and the many editions of Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett's works. These are all issued at prices splendidly suited for Christmas gifts.

Brother Scouts. By John Finnemore. (W. & R. Chambers, 5s.)—If you imagine a party of boy scouts in China, in the neighbourhood of river pirates, you will not be surprised to learn that they get into many adventures. And the Eagle Patrol do get into adventures, and very exciting ones at that. Mr. Finnemore knows how to tell a good story, and he is particularly happy in his scouting yarns. "Brother Scouts" will appeal to every British boy, whether he be one of Baden-Powell's Scouts or not. The book is splendidly illustrated with coloured pictures.

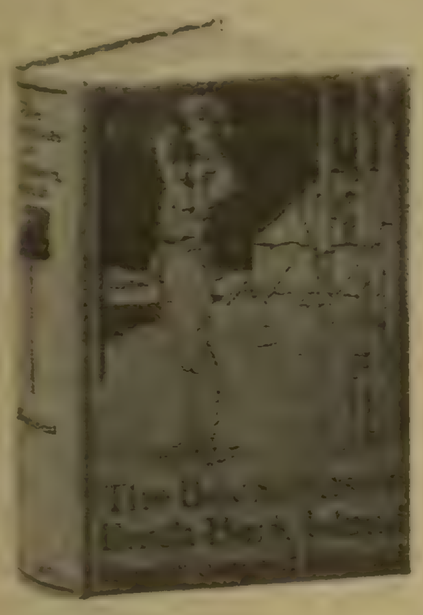
Wonder Book. (Ward, Lock & Co., 3s. 6d. and 5s.)—This delightful picture annual for boys and girls—full of short, interesting stories and rhymes—is sure to appeal to the younger brothers and sisters of CAPTAIN readers. Besides numerous stories this volume contains hundreds of pictures and twelve coloured plates, some of which are reproduced from paintings by Frank O. Salisbury, R.B.A., John R. Reid, R.I., and Henry Henshall, R.W.S. It is beautifully got up, and we feel sure would be a most acceptable Christmas present.

The Sword of Freedom. By Captain Charles Gilson (Hodder & Stoughton, 6s.)—Told with Captain Gilson's well-known skill in handling historical subjects, this story is full of that kind of action and excitement for which historical tales are chiefly so popular with young readers, and which were almost everyday events in earlier epochs. The story relates the exploits of Sir Richard Vyse, who, exiled from his country at the time of the Rye House Plot, is concerned in the revolution that led to the flight of James the Second and brought the Prince of Orange to the English throne. The Tower of London and the Palace of Whitehall figure interestingly in the plot, while private duels and seventeenth century inns help to convey the right historic atmosphere.

The Lion. By Agnes Herbert. (A. & C. Black, London, 5s.)—The life story of this king of beasts is told in a most thrilling and interesting manner by one who knows her subject thoroughly. Beginning with the days of babyhood we follow the adventures of the young lion right up to the last great tragedy, when he was tired and lone, and very old. It was night, and a pack of hyenas attacked him from behind, pinning him down by sheer weight of numbers. He sprang clear, and then with a forward slashing rip the nearest foe was laid open by the blunted claws. A second, a third, and a fourth he flung to one side as though in sportive *play*. Then they closed on him, knowing his ebbing strength. And so, fighting, fighting, the lion went down. Earlier on we read of grand battles: how the lion fought a rhinoceros, how he hunted the bush-buck and the zebra, and how he did battle for his mate. It was a grand struggle, that which the lioness witnessed between her two admirers; and

when the victor, ripped from eye to chin, drove off his adversary, she was proud to have him for her lord.

The Boy Scouts of Birch-bark Island. By Rupert Sargent Holland. (W. J. Ham Smith, 3*s.* 6*d.* net.)—Many books have been published this year about British Boy Scouts, but this one is about the American variety. And let us say straight away that the American lad is just as keen a scout as the Britisher, and he has just the same good times. "Birch-bark Island" is the scene of a holiday camping-ground of a troop, and the story of their sojourn there is well worth reading. It is thoroughly interesting from start to finish, and many a scout will pick up a useful hint from its pages.

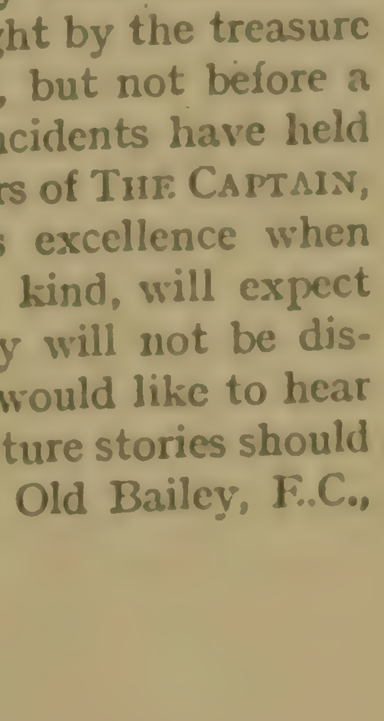


The Compleat Angler. By Izaak Walton, with illustrations In colour by James Thorpe. (Hodder & Stoughton, 15*s.* net.)—A Christmas present that would bring joy to every boy who loves the gentle art of angling would be this beautiful edition of Izaak Walton's immortal work. There is no need to speak here of the merits of the text, for every open-air fellow knows—and has probably read—the contents of this classic on fishing in particular and country life in general. But the special merit of this wonderful edition is the supreme excellence of its production; it presents to us a superb work in a superb manner. It is handsomely bound and printed, and there are two dozen full-page (and detachable for framing, if required) illustrations by Mr. James Thorpe. These illustrations make the work of the philosophic angler a thing of beauty indeed, and those boys who can induce their parents to make them a present of this delightful volume will add to their book-shelves a work which they can always turn to with pride.

Rebels and Rogues. By Tom Bevan. (Nisbet, 5*s.*)—An author who writes of a well-known episode—in this case Sedgemoor—labours under a considerable disadvantage, in that one knows a good deal of his plot beforehand. Mr. Bevan escapes this difficulty by laying very little stress on the futile rebellion itself, and making the interest centre on the adventures of a few well-born alleged rebels—all except two of whom are quite guiltless—after the fight.

It is a well-told, interesting story, with plenty of good incident and exciting adventures, and some very delightful characters, notably Aunt Rhoda, the strong-willed old lady who reduces even a detachment of Kirke's "lambs" to some sort of decency of behaviour; Edward Bruton, a very agreeable highwayman, whom she tames and makes into a decent member of society; and Nancy, her great-niece. Nancy, owing to a strange taste for blue gloves—Monmouth's colour—is arrested, or rather abducted, by a blackguardly officer of Kirke's Regiment. But, thanks to the highwayman, she is restored to her family after some unpleasant adventures. She is arrested again, and is sentenced by Jeffreys to be sold as a slave; but is rescued at sea with her relatives, who all escape to the Continent, and all ends satisfactorily. A good story, and enjoyable reading.

The Quest of the "Golden Hope." By Percy F. Westerman. (Blackie & Son, 5*s.*)—All the fascination inseparable from hunts after hidden treasure is found in this book of Mr. Westerman's. Clifford Hammond, the son of a retired sea captain, saves the life of Captain Miles, a refugee from Sedgemoor, and in gratitude the captain shares with the lad's father the secret of a great treasure. An expedition in quest of this wealth is planned, and the *Golden Hope* sets sail, on board of which young Clifford has concealed himself, though this is not discovered till the vessel is far at sea. After much adventure the vessel comes to the treasure island, only to be attacked by three buccaneering craft. The rich prize sought by the treasure seekers is eventually secured, but not before a mutiny and other exciting incidents have held the reader in suspense. Readers of THE CAPTAIN, who know Mr. Westerman's excellence when dealing with sea life of any kind, will expect much of this story, and they will not be disappointed. Captainites who would like to hear of many other splendid adventure stories should write to Messrs. Blackie, 50, Old Bailey, E.C., for their new list.



BURYING THE HATCHET

BY HAROLD AVERY

"FORM fours! As you were! Form fours!"

Sergeant Strappe's features assumed a pained expression, for the mistake had been repeated, and even now two boys in the front rank stood shoulder to shoulder. There was a pause; then, with measured tread, the instructor bore down upon the squad.

"What's your number, Whitney?" he inquired.

"Fifteen," was the prompt reply.

"What's your number, Royle?"

"Fifteen."

Strappe disdained to argue the point.

"As you were!" he roared. "Number!"

"*One*," bawled the right man, and the clatter of voices ran down the line till it reached the spot where the sergeant was standing. "*Fifteen! Sixteen!*"

"Ah, I thought so!" said Strappe, in a rasping tone. "You've forgotten your number, Royle. It's always the same—morning after morning you're out of your place, or doing something you ought not to. Just pay attention, and don't let me have to speak to you again."

The sergeant retired to his former position in the centre of the school-yard.

"Form fours! Right! By your left, quick march!"

A brisk stamp of feet followed the last word of command. The squad stepped off, with admirable precision, then, a moment later the whole column was thrown into confusion, almost as if a shell had exploded in its midst. Royle slipped, and came down heavily in sitting posture; a boy in the following section of fours promptly fell over him; and, a moment later, as if seizing an opportunity too good to be lost, three more young gentlemen had stumbled over the obstacle, and lay prostrate on the ground. Sections in rear closed up, bumping into one another like the trucks of a shunting goods train.

"Halt! Front!" roared Strappe.

His eagle eye had seen the manner in which the disaster had been brought about. There was ice on the ground, and it was possible that the offender might have upset the squad through no fault of his own, but he was rather given to playing the fool during drill, and the instructor decided to regard the mishap as a deliberate attempt to cause confusion.

"Royle—fall out!" he commanded. "No—not a word. I'll have no more of your 'um-bug. Go indoors, and report yourself to Mr. Bexford."

Moswich College never seemed to be without Royles and Whitneys, bearers of the two names being furnished by four families, all prolific in sons. At the period of the present story, reckoning brothers and cousins, there were in the school Whitneys 1, 2, and 3, and Whitney E. G.; Royles 1 and 2, and Royles H. and C. Past and present the Whitneys and Royles had always dwelt amicably together under the same roof, and won their fair share of laurels both in scholarship and athletics.

By middle day the majority of the school had probably forgotten the fact of Royle H. having been "sent in" from drill. The incident might, indeed, seem too trivial to chronicle did it not mark the commencement of an amazing feud between eight boys who had hitherto found no cause for disagreement.

A short time after dismissal at the close of

morning school a group of idlers lingered in the Lower Fifth class-room listening to a heated dispute between Royle H. and Whitney 2. The former was seated at a desk already at work on the imposition awarded him by the head-master.

"It was your fault," he was saying. "You know it was."

"What a cram!" retorted Whitney. "We both slipped on the ice."

"You gave me a push."

"I tell you I didn't."

"Oh, dry up, the pair of you!" exclaimed a fellow named Austin. He was strolling up the room, and, in passing, gave Whitney a sharp dig in the ribs with his elbow. The action was a simple one, but it led to an unexpected result. Whitney gave a jump, and bumped against one end of the long desk at the further extremity of which Royle sat writing his lines. A half empty ink-well, which had been carefully balanced on its side, was shaken from its moorings, and went clattering down to the floor, disgorging a portion of its contents over a finished sheet of imposition paper. The events of the morning had given a raw edge to Royle's temper, and he sprang up boiling with wrath.

"You rotter, you can't say you didn't do that on purpose!" he cried. "If you think you're going to keep on ragging me I'll jolly well make you stop it."

The declaration was followed, almost immediately, by a spirited, though somewhat unequal, contest—pearwood T-square *v.* blackboard pointer. It was continued amidst shouts of encouragement on the part of the spectators. At length a shrewd cut with the pointer snapped the T-square off in the middle, and Whitney, finding himself thus practically disarmed, took refuge in flight.

Unfortunately the strife was not destined to remain confined to two persons. Royle C., a sandy-haired boy who had been absent from drill, was somehow led to understand that his brother had been upset by Whitney E. G., though the latter had marched in the "left half-company" instead of in the right. As the classes were passing on to the general assembly at the close of afternoon school, Royle C. suddenly charged into Whitney E. G., exclaiming, "Two can play at that game, my boy!" The victim of this undeserved attack did not wait to demand an explanation, but flung himself upon his assailant, and, a few moments later, when Mr. Grove appeared on the scene, he found the passage strewn with books, and two fellows apparently practising some violent form of jiu-jitsu. The master put down the names of both boys for detention.

After that, to use a homely phrase, the situation became a "bit mixed," and between tea and the commencement of prep. a sharp skirmish took place between the Whitneys and Royles in the boot-room, where they slippered one another vigorously till the bell put an end to the conflict. It was all very foolish and regrettable, but so perhaps are wars in general.

In justice to Whitney 1 and Royle 1, who might have been regarded as the respective chieftains of the rival clans, it should be said that, at first, they showed themselves disinclined to take any active part in the quarrel, garbled accounts of which were given them by their juniors; but it was almost impossible that they should for long remain neutral. The feud continued, and became a sort of round game in which every player was free to follow his own idea of the rules.

On the third morning after the drill episode Royle 1 was passing a small room on the ground floor, devoted to music practice, when the door opened, and his brother rushed forth, flushed and excited.

"Hullo, young 'un, what's up?"

"It's that young beast Whitney 3," was the reply. "He's been stuffing cheese rind into my fiddle! I can't get it out, and I've got to go for my lesson in half an hour."

"How d'you know it was Whitney 3?"

"Why, young Tomson saw him do it."

The head of the clan proceeded to investigate. With a piece of bent wire, and a great many "Hangs!" and "Bothers!" he managed to extract the cheese-rind from the inside of the instrument, but in so doing he brought down the sound-peg, and all his endeavours to get it up again proved fruitless.

"I can't do it," he exclaimed, angrily. "You'll have to get old Steadman to put it up for you. One thing I will do, I'll punch that young idiot's head!"

In the school-yard, a few moments later, Whitney 3 beheld Royle 1 bearing down upon him with a wrathful look.

"Yes, my young friend, I've got a word to say to you. What have you been doing to my brother's fiddle?"

"Shut up—let go!" bleated Whitney 3, endeavouring to extricate himself from the senior's grasp.

"Why do you play tricks like that? What sense is there in it?"

"It's his own fault—he called me 'little Bulgy,'" answered the youthful Whitney, who was inclined to stoutness, and who seemed to think that when an opponent's opening move took the form of inventing a nickname the correct and legitimate reply was to poke cheese-rind into a violin.

"I don't care what he called you. You little beast, I'll just——"

"Hullo, what's the row?"

The question was asked by Whitney I, who had suddenly appeared on the scene. He declined to see any reason for his youngest brother's head being cuffed, declaring that Royle was to blame. For nearly a full minute the two seniors struggled for the possession of "little Bulgy," who seemed to stand a fair chance of being torn limb from limb. The contest at length became so heated that, in a few moments the two chieftains appeared likely to be engaged in mortal combat. Fortunately the dispute attracted the attention of Hare, the head of the school, who happened to be passing.

"Oh, shut up!" he protested, good-humouredly. "'Pon my word, I don't know what's taken you fellows. It's nothing but Whitneys and Royles raising Cain all over the place."

The speaker linked his arm in that of Royle I, and dragged him away from his intended victim.

With the two chieftains now fairly involved the strife between the clans waxed hotter than ever. It is not necessary, nor would it be edifying, to enter into a detailed account of this extraordinary feud, of its plots and counter-plots, its raids and ambuscades. Once it may be said to have skirted the edge of disaster when Royle H., armed with a squirt pistol, and lying in wait for Whitney E. G., all but discharged the contents of his weapon into the careworn face of a middle-aged *pater-familias* being shown over the premises by the head master. Again, it reached something like a climax when one afternoon, either by accident or design, the Whitneys and Royles played on opposite sides in a practice game of football. The contest was a memorable one, parts of the game might have been described as "glorious," though they could hardly have been called football. Later in the day there was a big demand on the matron's stock of arnica.

This general engagement was followed by a lull in the strife. Probably the two chieftains secretly regretted the display of feeling they had given way to on the playing field, from which all bad blood should for ever be banished. But the term drew to within five days of its close without any formal declaration of peace.

One fellow in the school there was who had watched the feud with interest, and deplored the chance of its now being allowed to fizzle out without some final bang. Pennell was a born mischief maker, and liked nothing better than a row, so long as he himself was not personally engaged. He could never pass two growling dogs in the street without exclaiming "At him!" and, though he had a great regard for his own skin, he set small value on the skins, eyes, and noses of other people. He and his friend Sawyer were warming themselves at a coil of hot-water pipes when Royle H. crossed their line of vision.

"What a 'happy family' those Whitneys and Royles would make if they were all mixed up together in a cage," remarked Pennell. "It would be rare fun to shut the whole lot of 'em up in an empty room, and let 'em fight it out."

"What's all the row been about?"

"Goodness knows how it started! I made sure they'd have slaughtered one another before the term ended."

"You'd better suggest it to them," said Sawyer after a pause.

"Suggest what?"

"Why, that idea of yours that they should muster in force, and fight it out in an empty room."

"I'd like to see 'em at it," murmured Pennell with a grin. "I wonder if it would be possible to egg 'em on a bit."

The notion lingered in his mind, and was revived in an unexpected manner on the following morning. Heavy snow had fallen during the night, and lay thick on the hard ground. Happening, before breakfast, to pass the open door which formed the boys' entrance to the school buildings, Pennell caught sight of a snowball flying through the air. He was struck with a bright idea. During breakfast he sat munching his food lost in thought, and by the time the meal was ended a project had taken definite shape in his mind.

Early in the afternoon Whitney I was standing watching some boys who were engaged in making a toboggan slide down one side of the playing field where the ground fell away in a steep slope. A little to the left was a small hillock surmounted by an oak tree the base of which was encircled by a round wooden seat. It formed a feature of the ground, which was always referred to by the college boys as the Mound.

"I say, Whitney!"

"Hullo!"

Anyone who had known the real nature of Pennell's errand might have been amazed at his cool effrontery. He marched up with the air of a person entrusted with an important mission.

"Look here," he began, "if the Royles undertake to hold the Mound in a snow fight against your tribe will you Whitneys try to storm the fort?"

Whitney 1 raised eyebrows with a look of surprise. He had no particular desire for a battle, but it so happened he had been led into some trifling dispute with Royle 1 that same morning, and he never doubted but that Pennell's message was a definite challenge, the result of a council of war held in the camp of the enemy.

"When?" he inquired, briefly.

"Oh, not now—this moment," answered Pennell, for all the world as if he had been chosen to act as an intermediary. "If your lot are game we'll fix a time. Don't go telling the fellows, or we shall have half the school wanting to take a hand in the game, and so spoil the fun."

"Don't believe John Royle would do it," answered Whitney, carelessly. "What's the good?"

Pennell promptly went off in search of the rival chieftain.

"Fred Whitney says that you four Royles won't hold the Mound against the Whitneys, and let them attack you with snowballs."

"He says that, does he?" returned John Royle, bristling up at once. "Let 'em try it on."

So adroitly did Pennell play his cards that, before the bell rang for afternoon school, the two clans were committed to a snow battle on the following day. Pennell passed from one camp to the other, giving the Royles to understand that the challenge had come from the Whitneys, and leading the Whitneys to believe that it was the rival clan who had first flung down the gage. He impressed on both sides the necessity for keeping the affair private lest the duel should be interfered with by a crowd of uninvited spectators. The time appointed was during the interval between the end of afternoon school and the bell for tea. It would not be too dark, for the weather was clear, and the moon rose early.

In that dreadful moment their enmity was forgotten. Royle made a reckless dive for the handle of the huge roller.

"You see," remarked Pennell to Sawyer, who had been let into the secret, "it may start with a snow fight, but, when they get to close quarters, they'll go for one another like Kilkenny cats, and there'll be no one to stop

them. 'Pon my soul, it'll be a sight worth seeing!"

The hostile clansmen kept their own counsel, silently girding themselves for the fray. When Wednesday dawned there seemed every prospect of a battle royal; but, before the fatal hour fixed upon for the assault, something was destined to happen in the playing field which led to an unexpected interference with Pennell's design.

It was nearly dinner-time; most of the fellows who had been wandering about after morning school had retired indoors, though a few stragglers still remained in the neighbourhood of the toboggan slide, which, worn with hard usage, was undergoing repairs. At the head of the incline stood Whitney 1 with his cousin "E. G."; immediately behind them was a long, open play-shed in one corner of which stood a small iron roller, stowed away there for the winter months by Coates, the school gardener.

A wild idea suddenly occurred to the Whitney chieftain.

"Look here, E. G.," he said. "Let's get the roller, and run it down the slide. That ought to take out some of the bumps."

"You'll have to be careful what you're about," was the reply. "Or the blessed thing'll bolt with us. There's no sure foothold, remember."

"Oh, that's all right," remarked the other. "Come on, and give me a hand."

A few moments later the roller was in position for the start.

"Hi! Look out down there!"

The warning was addressed to "little Bulgy," who, far down at nearly the bottom of the slope, was diligently patting fresh snow into a bare spot on the track. He might have heard, but delayed to move; anyway, he made no reply, but remained in the same crouching position with his back to the hill.

What happened next seemed to take place almost in a moment.

"Steady!—look out!" muttered "E. G." His foot slipped, then down he went, with Whitney on top of him. The next instant the roller was travelling down the incline with the speed of an express train. There was a discordant yell of several voices, "little Bulgy" turned his head, saw the murderous iron cylinder descending upon him, and remained as if rooted to the spot, bereft of all power of movement. Half way down the hill, and close to the track, stood Royle 1. In that dreadful moment the tribal war was forgotten. There seemed one possible chance and only one of stopping the roller. As it rushed past him the boy made a reckless leap, and, for an instant, grasped the cross-bar of the swaying handle. It wrenched itself out of his hand with a force which flung him headlong, but the weight of his body had been sufficient to alter the course of the roller, jerking it round so that it plunged into the bank of snow which formed the margin of the slide, buried itself in the obstacle, and stopped dead.

For a moment not a sound was uttered, then came a burst of frantic cheering. Bruised and shaken, Royle picked himself up to find Whitney 1 already at his side.

"I say," panted the latter, whose face was the colour of ashes. "You—you aren't hurt, are you? Jolly fine of you, old chap—if you hadn't—young Hugh——"

The speaker broke off short as if he were gasping for breath. From various points of the compass Royle 2 and H., Whitneys 3 and E. G., came rushing to the spot. They all began talking at once. It seemed as if each one of them had enacted the part of rescuer or rescued. In a sense they fell on one another's necks, and vowed eternal friendship.

"I'm sorry there's been all this ragging between us lately," said Royle 1, as if speaking on behalf of his clansmen. "I dare say it's been mostly our fault. By the way, that notion of yours about a fight for the Mound can be considered 'off,' I suppose?"

"My dear chap, it wasn't my idea, it was you who sent the challenge."

"No, Pennell brought the challenge to me from you."

For a moment Whitney 1 looked puzzled, then a glimmer of light seemed to dawn on his understanding.

"So that was his game, was it?" he muttered. "Hum!—just like that beggar Pennell. I suppose he thought he'd engineer the whole affair for his own private entertainment. All right; we won't scratch the fixture. I'll just tell you what we'll do."

The clansmen drew together in a group; when the bell rang for dinner they were still engaged in an eager and animated consultation.

* * * * *

No sound broke the silence of the playing field save the soft scrunch of snow beneath the feet of the Whitney storming party advancing to the assault. A dozen yards behind them followed Pennell and Sawyer, exchanging nudges with their elbows. Away on the summit of the

Mound, and dimly visible in the moonlight, stood the four Royles awaiting the attack. Each of the combatants had provided himself with a stock of snowballs crushed as hard as his hands could squeeze them.

"Halt!" murmured Whitney. "I say, Pennell," he continued, turning about, and speaking in a semi-jocular tone. "We must do the thing in style. You just go forward with a white handkerchief and summon the garrison to surrender. Tell 'em there'll be no quarter given if they don't."

Pennell was quite willing to undertake this mission, which he judged would be fruitless, and, with a chuckle, made his way to the front. In civilised warfare the person of a herald should be considered sacred, but, in this instance, hardly had the messenger arrived within speaking distance of the Mound than the defenders fired a close and destructive volley. Pennell staggered, and turned about, only to be smitten with a stinging discharge on the part of the stormers.

"Give it him!" shouted both garrison and assailants.

A few moments later Whitneys and Royles were mingling in a wild chase across the field. Away they went in full cry, with Pennell flying before them. In vain "little Bulgy" strove to keep pace with the pack. He came up panting and exhausted, to find his comrades apparently in the act of abandoning the pursuit.

"Where is he?"

Royle 1 made a backward inclination of his head in the direction of a huge snowdrift which lay piled up beneath the hedge.

"In there," was his brief reply.

Two mornings later the Whitneys and Royles travelled down to the railway station all crammed together inside the same omnibus. From their behaviour no one could have imagined there had ever been a moment's discord between them. As they rattled along they were voicing the words of a carol:—

"When the snow lay round about,
Deep and crisp and e—ven."

THE END.

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The Cavalier in Grey

The Story of a Terrible Christmas Eve

By GUNBY HADATH

IN the grey hours of the morning of December 24th last I landed in England from Chili; at midday I was boarding the train at St. Pancras, *en route* for Cribourne Abbey and my friend Jack Ferguson.

Three years had passed since I had seen Ferguson. Our ways had parted on the slopes of the Andes, when I went forward with my father on his survey for the rail, and Jack went back to discover, as presently transpired, his marvellous copper property at Huiquintipa. Ten months' hard work upon this property; a quick trip to England to sell it to a London company; a trip out again to superintend the work of development and construction, and Jack went home for good, a rich man and a happy one. What time I had remained to follow my father's fortune in the wilds.

Ferguson, as you will understand, is a very much older man than I am. Indeed, by English standards, I have still to wait three years before I can be called a man. But you mature rapidly on the steppes of Chili and Peru, and, although I was only seventeen when the dad sent me home last Christmas, ten years of South America had hardened me to manhood. My limbs were set; I was burned to a fine copper; I wore a proud moustache.

My father had kept up a desultory correspondence with Ferguson. And so we had heard that he was married; that he and his wife were "prospecting"—as he put it—for a home in the English shires, and eventually that they had found what they wanted at Cribourne Abbey, in the Derbyshire vales. "And mind, old man," Jack had added to the dad, "that you send young Felix over to see us as soon as ever you like. A good idea—send him to spend Christmas with us."

It *was* a good idea. And, as things were looking very rosy just then with the pater, he determined to act upon it. Twelve months in Europe he promised me, and a ripping time with various relatives after my visit had been paid to Jack.

I had left England a child of seven, I was coming back a man (yes, a man, please) of seventeen, and excellent it was to be at home, especially just at Christmastide. London was dirty, dark, and horribly noisy, but I can assure you that it seemed the brightest spot in Christendom to me, and St. Pancras Station, as I sauntered gaily to the train, was one of the gates of Paradise. For through it I was to pass to Jack, to mistletoe and holly, to plum pudding and roast beef, to jollity galore. Ah, if I had only known!

Save for a lanky fellow in the opposite corner, who appeared absorbed in the *Times*, I had the compartment to myself. But when you are newly returned from the sole society of peons and of half-castes, you welcome a chat with any casual Englishman. Yet, although I hazarded more than one overture to conversation, my fellow traveller refused to respond. So dismissing him as a surly bore, I turned to an evening paper which I had bought before entering the station. I remember that it had struck me as remarkable that evening papers should be on sale so early in the day. What news could they possibly obtain?

So I was about to throw it aside as dull when my eye caught the stop-press column. Ah, here *was* something fresh!

BANK ROBBERY IN THE CITY

It is reported that one of the cashiers of Lund's Bank, in Copthall Avenue, has absconded. Notes and negotiable securities to the value of many thousands of pounds are also missing. Inquiries at the absent man's residence reveal the fact that he has not been home since he left for business on the morning of yesterday, and from information received the police are satisfied that he is concerned in the theft. A warrant has been issued for his arrest.

Lower down in the same column I found a further paragraph.

BANK ROBBERY—LATEST

We understand that Samuel Vright, the cashier who has absconded with securities from Lund's Bank, was seen at London Bridge this morning. His arrest is imminent.

"Poor wretch!" reflected I. "So he'll spend his Christmas in gaol!"

Then I closed my eyes, and must have dropped off to sleep immediately. For next I remember that we were speeding along with extraordinary smoothness—we shake our passengers up a trifle in Chili—and my watch pointed to four o'clock. I recollected that we were due at Coolbridge, the market town for Cribourne, at the quarter past.

"Had a nice nap, Mr. O'Grady?"

I started. I had forgotten the presence of my fellow traveller. And I had further reason for astonishment—how did the man know my name? I leaned forward, staring at him.

In the bright electric light I marked his face clearly. And my surprise culminated to observe how closely, in one sense, his features resembled my own.

Now that they were no longer hidden by his paper, and I could mark them full, this likeness was a striking one.

I, as you know, was tanned to a rich chocolate. His cheeks were pale. My hair grew lank and straight. His curled crisply. But each of us had the same aquiline nose, the same clear, blue eyes, and the same deep lines upon the brow. Our moustaches, too, were of the same cut and colour. And possibly he looked but seven or eight years older than myself. But now he was smiling, beginning to speak again.

"So you're spending Christmas at Cribourne Abbey, Mr. O'Grady?"

Confound the fellow! He seemed to know my business altogether.

"You're just home from Chili, eh?" he resumed. "Been there a long time, I suppose?"

This was a little bit too much.

"I don't know you from Adam, sir," I snapped. "But I *am* home from Chili, my name *is* O'Grady, and I *am* bound for Cribourne Abbey. Now, how did you guess all that?"

He smiled again, offering me a cigar.

"No, you don't smoke," he laughed, as I waved the case away. "Well, you needn't be afraid of me. I'm not uncanny. Your kit-bag is on the rail above you. It has a fairly fresh Iquique label on the bottom, and a very big label on the near side, with your name and destination written large, so you must pardon me, you must really, for putting two and two together. It's a nice place, Cribourne Abbey."

"Oh, is it?" I muttered, a little sore that I had overlooked the obvious.

"Very nice," he purred, as one who is enjoying a big joke. "But there are some queer stories told of it, Mr. O'Grady."

"Queer? How?" I exclaimed.

"Oh, apparitions—ghosts—strange happenings!" he chuckled. And then, more gravely, and tapping me on the knee. "Seriously, Mr. O'Grady, I should never choose the Abbey to spend Christmas at myself."

"Rot!" I cried, rudely as I fear. "I'm not afraid of ghosts."

"No, of course you're not, my dear sir. Nobody ever is, until they've seen one."

"But Mr. Ferguson, who's leased the Abbey, says nothing of such bogies," I remarked.

The man took me up with earnestness. "Mr. Ferguson has only been there since January last," he replied impressively. "Since last January, remember that. This will be his first Christmas in the place. And it is only at Christmas time that—well, that things occur. But halloa! Here we are at Coolbridge! Good-bye, Mr. O'Grady, and a merry Christmas to you."

And with an ugly little laugh, and something very like a sneer, he jumped out and left me as the train slowed up at Coolbridge. My impression was that he was in a hurry.

Another twenty minutes, and Jack had almost wrung my arm off on the Cribourne platform, whence we drove to the Abbey; and in the joy of seeing him and the subsequent excitement of making the acquaintance

of Mrs. Ferguson and the members of the house party, I said nothing of my encounter in the train. It slipped completely from my mind.

"Now hurry up and change, boy," bade Jack two hours later. "We dine early to-night. A few more people, mostly young folk, are coming after dinner for a little Cinderella dance, fancy dress, and so forth. I've got some ripping togs for you. So come along, and I'll show you to your room. We make-up before dinner, you know."

Following Ferguson through corridor after corridor *en route* to the bachelors' wing, I realised the size of Cribourne Abbey. A fine pre-Georgian edifice, designed for comfort rather than display, long passages, dark corners, great staircases, high embrasured windows—well, could you imagine a place more adaptable to Christmas fun? I couldn't.

Jack had provided me with something unique in fancy costumes. Exactly what it represented I never have determined conclusively, but I turned out, eventually, something between one of Saladin's warriors and an Inca of Peru. I was girt with a chain cuirass of native silver (which Jack had picked up from the Indians on the Cordilleras), and that rattled most confoundedly, with various trappings of silk and other odds and ends of accoutrements. I wore, too, a sword shaped like a half-moon.

Well, I admired myself for a minute or so, gave my moustache a final twirl, blew out the candles on my dressing-table, and down I went to dinner. But ascending under Jack's guidance, I had been careless to follow the twists and turns in the corridors we had traversed, and now I regretted my inadvertence. In short, I lost my way. Down one corridor I hastened, but no, no signs there of the great stairway to the hall. Up another I returned—it ended in a *cul de sac*. It is tiresome to lose your way in a new house; it becomes desperate when the house is a rambling old structure like the Abbey.

Ah, here was a passage on my right, this must be the turning I had missed. So I plunged down it, and presently I came out on a broad landing, which should have been lighted by the candles that were bunched together at intervals in the big sconces on the walls. But not a candle of them all was burning. This seemed a little strange, but one side of the passage, as I found, was the outer wall of the house, for it was broken here and there by deep oriel windows, which ran from floor to ceiling. And through these windows a dim moonlight streamed.

I passed down the passage, but I found no means of exit at that end. So I turned back again, for it seemed clear that the other must lead on to some stairway. And then I saw that I was not alone.

With his back to me, and gazing out of one of the oriel windows by which I had just come, a man was standing. He stood very still. The moonlight shone full upon his figure, so that each detail of his costume was clearly visible.

He was clothed from head to foot in grey: grey trunks, a grey doublet, a great grey ruffle round his neck, and a grey hat with a huge feather of the same colour upon his head. A thin rapier was hanging from his waist, but this made no sound whatsoever, as I marked well at the moment, when he swung half round to face me as I came.

I will admit that his costume startled me a little at first sight. For it was that of a Cavalier of the Restoration. But next instant I recollected our Fancy Dress dance; it was plain that here was one of the house party, pranked up as I was myself, about to descend to dinner. He would tell me the way down.

"I'm afraid, sir," I said, as I halted at his side, "that I've—er—sort of lost my way, you know. I only just arrived this evening."

The moonlight plays strange pranks at times. And now it painted waxen-white the face he turned upon me. I shuddered almost, for his eyes seemed to pierce me through and through. And then he raised a dainty cambric handkerchief, and pressed it to his lips. The handkerchief, I marked, was flecked with crimson stains.

But he gave me no word in reply.

"Gloomy beggar," thought I, and then aloud: "I mean I don't know my way down to dinner, sir. I shall be awfully obliged, you know, if you will show me?"

He dabbled with that horrid handkerchief, but he answered nothing.

"Confound it, sir," I was beginning again, when I broke off with a laugh. At the far end of the passage, the quarter which I had not explored, I had heard the ring of laughter, and the *frou-frou* of ladies' skirts. Ah, that was the way, then. Well, I would leave this disagreeable creature to himself. He need never come down at all, for all I cared.

So off I went, and a quick turn brought me out on to a new corridor, and right into the middle of a merry company going down to dinner. All were attired for the dance, and found great fun, as you may suppose, in

quizzing each other's costumes. But I think mine came in for more criticism than any.

About twenty of us sat down in the great oak dining-room, and I found myself on Mrs. Ferguson's left. We had so much to tell each other, comparing notes on Jack, that we had come to the dessert before I thought to mention my Cavalier in grey. I was curious to learn his identity. It would serve him right, I fancied also, if I remarked on his rudeness to a fellow guest.

I looked down the table to see where he was sitting. I looked again. I could not see him anywhere.

"I've misjudged the poor beggar," I told myself; "he must have been ill, and that's why he hasn't come down. Why, of course. Yes—that handkerchief—he was spitting blood." So I felt alarmed for him, and hastened to call Mrs. Ferguson's attention to his absence.

"Mrs. Ferguson," I said. "I'm afraid there's somebody not well. I mean one of the party hasn't come down."

"Oh!" asked Mrs. Ferguson, helping herself to a glass of wine. "Who's that?"

"I don't know," I replied. "At least, I don't know his name. It's a tall, thin man. I met him——"

"Yes?" she asked again. She was pausing eagerly, the wineglass held half way to her lips.

"I met him in the corridor just now. He was looking out of one of those big windows. He was got up like a Cavalier—all in grey; grey trunks, grey doublet, grey——"

Crash! She had dropped the glass. It lay shattered on the cloth, and the wine was trickling on to her knees.

Her husband jumped up in alarm. "Eh, Betty? What is it?" he cried, anxiously.

Mrs. Ferguson was wiping the port wine from her frock. "Oh, nothing, Jack," she murmured, without raising her head. "I felt queer a moment. It's so hot in here."

When the thermometer outside is nearly at zero heat attacks are a little unusual. I was certain that Mrs. Ferguson's faintness must be attributed elsewhere. But it was not my business. Though I decided to say no more of the Cavalier in grey. After all, thought I, why trouble myself if the beggar is unwell? He didn't bother about me.

The figure moved. Its right arm shot out, and in the moonlight I was looking down the barrel of a revolver.

The ladies left us, and when we had closed up to send the decanters round I caught Jack regarding me strangely once or twice. He seemed on the point of putting some inquiry, but apparently he thought better of it.

And now the guests from out of doors had begun to arrive. So off we went to the picture gallery to dance. To me, so long debarred from civilised society, the scene was glorious. And Jack the youngest of us all!

How that man did enjoy himself! Up

struck the violins. Round and round he went—galloping with demoiselles of France and dairymaids and great-grandmothers in crinolines and fisher lassies in petticoats of scarlet. For fancy costume lends the colour and real gaiety to a dance which your ordinary ball wants badly.

"This is something like a Christmas Eve," thought I.

We had adjourned for supper and the dancers were returning to the gallery in twos and threes—save the few couples who had drifted quietly apart—when our host bade us take our places for the lancers.

And then a curious incident occurred.

The sets were forming, and the fiddles scraping their preliminary scrapes. Mrs. Ferguson and I formed the "tops" of one set, and were standing close to a curtained archway which led out somewhere or other, when suddenly the heavy curtain was drawn aside: it rattled on its rings.

Through the aperture a tall figure advanced. It was my Cavalier in grey!

To his lips he held that red-stained handkerchief, and, so holding it, he moved gravely to Mrs. Ferguson. He bowed, his face motionless, regarding her with cold, sad eyes. Then he turned, and went out as silently as he had come.

But I know that Mrs. Ferguson saw little of his movements. For the moment that he presented himself she cast one glance at him, looked him up and down from head to toe, then gasped something inaudible, and fell in a dead faint in my arms.

We raised her and carried her away. The other sets, fortunately, were too busy with their dancing—for the fiddlers had now struck up—to give much heed to the commotion in our party, and I satisfied the people about me, curious for an explanation of the scene, with some cock-and-bull yarn which I invented on the spur. I told them, I believe, that the fellow was one of the people staying in the house who had bet Mrs. Ferguson a pair of gloves that he would spring a surprise on her before the night was over. Well, how else could you explain it? My story was as good as any other.

But I can assure you that I felt very far from comfortable. My friend in the train—what had he told me about Cribourne Abbey on Christmas Eve? I remembered it all, now. "Such things are all nonsense, O'Grady, my friend," said I. "*But*——!"

Honestly I was relieved when the guests began to go. I was relieved when the house party went, one by one, to bed. I rejoiced when Jack assured me presently that his wife was quite recovered, and fast asleep.

"Come into my den," he concluded, "and tell me all about the thing."

So we settled ourselves in his snuggery, but I'll admit I felt somewhat upset. The gentleman with the white face and the grey hose, and the horrible blood-flecked handkerchief, had done my nerves no good. I recalled the figure he made, framed in the moonlight against that oriel window, looking me through and through and saying never a word. Hang the creature!

There and then without more ado I spun Ferguson the whole yarn. I started with the train incident; proceeded to the encounter in the corridor; explained how I had been inquiring of Mrs. Ferguson at dinner when she dropped her glass, and ended up with the thing's appearance in the gallery. Yes, I was calling it a *thing*, now!

Jack heard me through without comment. But when I had finished he pointed to the mantelpiece, to a painting over his head.

"Is that the man?" he asked, hoarsely.

So far as the Cavalier in grey had given me opportunity to remark, the picture was his exact presentment. There he hung, looking down from the canvas at us with the same cold eyes. Grey trunks, grey doublet, grey ruffle, and grey hat with the huge feather; the man himself, as I had seen him in the flesh. *In the flesh?* Ah, but *had* I seen him in the flesh?

"Jack!" I gasped. "For Heaven's sake! Jack!"

Ferguson took a long draught from his tumbler; he also was scarcely master of his nerve.

"Listen, Felix; I'll tell you all I know. When I took this house on lease one of the conditions was that I must leave that painting on the wall there, just as it hangs now. A strange condition, but what did I care? Tenant after tenant has abided by the same. For that fellow in grey, Felix, has hung there for two hundred and seventy years!"

"Yes," I remarked feebly.

"Yes. That picture was painted by Van Ockenden, a Dutchman who did a big business in Charles the Second's time. It is the portrait of Sir Geoffrey Butland, who was one of the fops at Court until he fell out with the King and was sent to banishment down here. He built this house, and he lived ten wicked,

roystering years in it. I believe there is no evil which these old walls have not witnessed. Can't you guess the rest ? "

" No," I muttered, " I can't."

" One night he had a party here—it was the night of Christmas—Christmas Eve—just as it is to-night, O'Grady. They had been drinking, dicing, making brute beasts of themselves. But there was a girl whom Butland loved, loved truly they say, the daughter of one of his boon companions. A light word was said of her by a gallant of the party. Butland fell on him and they fought. But the maid rushed between them, and, God help him ! she fell by her own lover's sword. The man lost his reason. For months he would scarce take food. Day and night he paced that corridor, you know the one I mean, Felix " —Jack's voice was trembling—" mouthing and kissing the poor girl's handkerchief, all red as it was with her blood, unwashed from that awful night. He never recovered his wits, but died the June following."

" But how do you know all this ? " I asked.

" It's the common property of the district, boy. It's passed into legend, and it's true enough. When I leased the house the agent gave me its full history. But he added something further."

" Yes ? " I muttered again.

" As your friend in the train told you, I only came in last January. So I've never had a chance, before to-night "—Jack dwelt with significance upon the last two words—" I've never had a chance before to-night of testing his further information. But he warned me that on Christmas Eve, the night of the murder, the fellow walks." Jack's voice had fallen to a whisper. " ' The fellow walks, Mr. Ferguson,' the agent said. Of course, I laughed at him."

" And your wife, Jack ? "

" Betty didn't like it. But I laughed at her too. I talked all the usual rot to her—that spirits can't walk ; and I promised her a new necklace if ever she heard or saw anything of a Cavalier in grey. Gad ! I think the poor girl's earned that necklace, boy."

" But have other folk seen—*it* ? In the last few years I mean, Jack ? "

" I can find no credible evidence either for or against that." Jack was growing more like his old self again now that he had unbosomed his secret. " I've heard all the usual servant gossip, of course, and all the old villagers' yarns. And the rector of Cribourne, an educated man of sound sense, was rather inclined, when I chatted it over with him, to take the ghost for gospel. He pointed out how many authenticated instances of supernatural appearances have been recorded. He quoted case after case which is absolutely unassailable. Well, Felix, what do you think ? "

" I think I should like to turn in," said I, with an assurance I was far from feeling.

" All right," Jack yawned. But as we were parting in the hall I turned to him.

" I say, bring your candle and guide me through those plaguey corridors. I'll never find the way by myself. It seems miles round to your bachelors' wing ! "

I was trying to put it lightly, but Jack noticed my uneasiness. And he was far the braver of the two of us. For he bore me company right up to my room door, *and he would have to go back alone.*

I heard him whistling, whistling remarkably loud, as he hastened off to his own quarters. I admit that I bolted my own door before I took my things off. But then I told myself I was a coward ; that I feared no earthly visitor, and bars would not exclude a ghostly one : for very shame I got from bed again and drew the bolt back. I did not even lock it. And so I blew out my candle, and went to sleep.

I always dream at nights. And now, I remember, I dreamed that I was back at Chili. I was picking my way with a gang of peons along the Mal Peso pass, that hazardous mule track which hangs between earth and heaven on the cliffside up to Copaquire. We had just come to the narrowest edge, where a slip means death, when—I woke up with a start.

I was conscious that something was in the room !

I sat up in bed. I peered out into the darkness. I could see nothing. So I rose, and going to the window I drew back the thick curtains. A great shaft of moonlight struck through, and where it streamed, right on to the foot of my bed, the place was all but light as day. " What a glorious night ! " said I.

But there was nobody there, certainly. So I went to sleep once more.

Almost immediately afterwards, as it seemed, I was sitting up again. There *was* somebody in my room. I felt it.

Then I saw him.

I saw him. I saw his grey doublet, trunks, and ruffle ; his wax-white face ; the rapier at his thigh. Full in the moonlight he stood, his bloody handkerchief pressed across his lips. And he was regarding me intently.

"I have been waiting for you to wake," he said.

I looked blankly back at him. Why conceal it?—I was too terrified to move. My heart was pumping like a piston rod, and the sweat streamed off me.

"I have been waiting for you to wake," he repeated.

In a rush speech came to my lips. But whether I or some other spoke I scarcely knew, for my voice rang strange to me.

"Confound you!" I screamed, and added a string of Chilian expletives. "I'm not afraid of you, whatever you are!" But, in fact, I was quaking pitiably.

The figure moved. Its right arm shot out, dropping the handkerchief, and in the moonlight I was looking down the barrel of a revolver. At which my wits returned to me, for whoever met a spirit carrying a Smith-Wesson?

"Cry again," he hissed, "and I blow your brains out. I'd rather not do that, because I have need of you."

"Oh, have you?" said I. "That's like your impudence." But I was careful to answer in a whisper, and to hold myself very still.

"I want your clothes, the clothes you came to the Abbey in. Where are they?"

My situation was perfectly clear to me at last. It appeared quite obvious that I was confronting a dangerous lunatic. Else what was the creature doing here?

"You're mad!" cried I, with no compunction for his feelings.

He drew his lips back in a ghastly grin.

"Perhaps I am," he answered. "Perhaps I am. But that makes it no better for you. I'll shoot you out of hand unless you bring me your clothes. Now get them quick, and no hanky-panky mind!"

Covered by his weapon I took my tweed suit from the press in which Jack's man had placed it after brushing, and brought it to him. Obviously I must humour the creature.

Still covering me, with a fiendish ingenuity he managed to struggle and twist himself until he had wriggled, somehow, out of the grey doublet, the ruffle, and the trunks, and donned my clothes instead. More than once during this process I meditated a rush at him, but always reflected that the risk was too great of being plugged before I pulled him down.

But his next command was more astonishing.

"Now put on my things; this rubbish here," he commanded, indicating the grey costume. "Put them all on. And now the wig, please."

I obeyed him. What other could I do? "Shall I take the beastly handkerchief as well?" I snapped, when I stood before him, at last, in the attire I had come to loathe so strongly.

For the first time he laughed naturally. "No, leave it; it's served its turn," he answered. "Now march to the window. No tricks, I tell you."

He bade me open the casement, leaning over me, his right hand on my shoulder, his left pressing the cold pistol to my ear.

"Now," he whispered, and pointed out to the great lawn which lay a stretch of sparkling silver under the moon. "Do you mark that belt of trees across the grass? You will slip down the ivy; it is no drop to the ground; and you will make straight to those trees. You will walk erect and slowly. I shall be watching you, with my revolver; watching you from this window, and I never miss!"

"If I refuse?" I said.

He pressed the barrel till it bit into my flesh. "You won't refuse," he growled. "If you refuse, you die now."

Again, what could I do? Whereas once on the grass below I should be free of the madman. Once among the trees and I could defy him, returning by the back to wake the house. Indeed, as I pondered, his crazy whim seemed to open a safe door to my escape.

So down the ivy I slid with little harm but a scratch or two, and, looking up to mark his evil features at the window—his evil eyes upon me, I set off steadily across the lawn. I expected at any instant, I confess, to hear a bullet sing above my head. But no, he kept his word, apparently. And so I gained the belt of trees.

As I did so a low whistle sounded. And before I quite realised what was happening I had been flung to the earth, a pair of handcuffs snapped upon my wrists, and two stout fellows were pinioning my ankles.

"It's 'im," gasped one, as he pulled the last knot tight. "'E's stained 'is face dark, and the wig and this 'ere toggery mek a bit o' difference; but it's 'im, mate. I'd know that nose anywhere. An' them lines acrost the fore'ed!"

"Then whistle Jim to bring the car along quietly," bade his companion.

"Now this is extraordinary treatment," thought I, "for an inoffensive engineer at 3 a.m. on Christmas Day." But I did my best to break from them.

"Say, who the blazes do you take me for?" I cried.

"Ah, stow that, Mr. Vright," laughed one. "We've got you. So come on quiet."

Bound as I was resistance was impossible. They plumped me into a big car which had come up noiselessly, and so down the drive and into the high road we went, and I reckoned we had been humming full speed for twenty minutes when we pulled up before a low, grey building on the outskirts of a town.

"Here we are. Coolbridge Police Station!" announced the man who seemed to be in charge, and bustled me into the station. I found the place lighted, and an inspector waiting to receive me. Three other constables lounged about the office.

"We've got him, sir!" cried my captor. "Took him stealing away from Cribourne Abbey, rigged up still in the mummery he'd borrowed from 'The Lion' here."

They loosened my ankles, and marched me up in front of the inspector's desk. He eyed me with extraordinary severity. In my torn and dirtied finery, and the heavy wig of lovelocks, I must have looked a weird object enough.

"Did he give much trouble, Joe?" enquired the inspector.

"No, sir. Very little, sir. You see, it was this way. We'd just tumbled, 'ad Tom an' I, to 'is reason for the fancy togs—dance on at the Abbey. 'I'll lay you 'e's there, Tom,' says I. So out we lit an' arrived there about two hey hem. Found all lights out—everyone in bed. We was about to call up Mister Ferguson when wot should we see but our fine cove 'ere a-stealing round a corner by the stables. 'E was in this grey fancy rig, 'e was. But 'e must 'ave twigged us, for 'e bolted back agin. 'No, Tom,' I says, says I, 'No, we won't wake the house'old up; we've got 'im safe enough, Tom,' I says; 'e'll try agin presently. Take 'im without a scandal, Tom,' says I. So we watches, and sure enough about an hour later we cotches sight of 'im a-slitherin' down from a winder on the second floor. Out 'e comes, bold as brass, straight

Before I quite realised what was happening I had been flung to the earth, a pair of handcuffs snapped upon my wrists, and two stout fellows were pinioning my ankles.

acrost the lawn to 'ide 'is ugly self among the trees. Then we up and cops 'im, sir. An' if only we'd tumbled a bit earlier to 'is dodge of 'iding 'isself among them Abbey guests, why then, sir, we'd a copped 'im last night, we would." Joe had concluded a little lamely.

"Anything to say, Vright?" demanded the inspector.

"Anything to say?" roared I. "Yes. I've this to say. You're a blessed idiotic ass! You're one lump of vacuous imbecility. My name is not Vright. It never was Vright. I'm Felix O'Grady, I am; Mr. Felix O'Grady, of Iquique. And, my snakes, I'll make you smart for this!"

"Oh, aye, of course you're Mr. O'Grady," laughed the inspector. "All our little birds are a Mr. Somebody-or-other-else when we've caged them."

"But Vright's a man," I yelled. "He must be if he's a bank cashier. And I'm only seventeen."

"A dashed fine baby for your age, I *don't* think," laughed the vulgar beast again. "Yes, you're seventeen, you are—and the rest. But we'll see all about that in the morning, Mr. Seventeen O'Grady. Meanwhile we pack you off to bed a spell. You'll sleep comfy in a cell here, Samuel *Vright*." With his ugly laugh once more he emphasised the name.

"Send for Mr. Ferguson, of Cribourne Abbey," I begged. "He'll tell you what a mistake you've made."

"Eh—ah? We'll send for him in the morning, then." And turning to my captor: "Joe, you strip him in his cell, and bring them togs out; we'll go through them."

With which they locked me securely up.

So here was a novel fashion of spending the early hours of my first Christmas Day in England for ten years. How I wished, then, that I only looked my age. Though, even so, that vile Cavalier costume must have added years to my appearance.

Of course I could not sleep. But at last—how long afterwards it seemed—I heard the Christmas bells, ringing for church; and presently there followed a sound more welcome still—Jack Ferguson's healthy voice.

Well, of course they apologised. They apologised profusely. They had been certain from the published description of the defaulter, with which, it seemed, I tallied, that I was Vright, the absconding cashier. And they had further good reason for their error, as will presently appear.

Was it likely that I could nurse any resentment, with the bells of Christmas morning ringing in my ears?

Driving back to the Abbey Jack told me how they had found my room empty in the morning; my clothes gone, the window open. How he had feared an accident, dreaded he knew not what, and telephoning to the police at Coolbridge had heard of their stupendous capture. "Yes," they told him, "the fellow had declared himself a Mr. O'Grady, but fugitives from justice generally spin donkey yarns like that." And so followed his visit to the station, and my speedy release.

But I shall never grudge the sequel to the appearance at Cribourne Abbey of the Cavalier in grey. For that sequel made Mrs. Ferguson a happy woman again, and robbed her of all terror of a silly legend. How she and I and Jack chuckled and laughed together over a letter which reached me at the Abbey three days afterwards. The envelope bore no post-mark; it had filtered through by hand. Ah, here is a copy of it:—

DEAR Mr. O'GRADY,—How very green you are! But I regret that my necessities compelled me to cause you so much terror and inconvenience.

It was charming of you to take me for a madman. It made the position so much easier for me, you know.

Well, it's due to you to explain exactly what occurred. No sooner had I set eyes on you in our carriage from St. Pancras than I realised how extraordinarily like myself you are. I was very hard pressed—as you noticed from that evening paper you enjoyed so much—and our mutual likeness gave me just the idea I wanted. I saw in it my only chance of escape.

To carry out my plan it was quite necessary, my dear O'Grady, that you should be prepared for apparitions at the Abbey. So I dropped you a gentle hint of what you might expect. I should have rubbed it in a little thicker, only I had to leave you at Coolbridge.

Now my first idea was to get up to the Abbey and lie low there, personating you if suspicion was aroused. But this was only a hazy outline, to be worked up. And how to work it up precisely I could not imagine until I entered "The Lion Inn" at Coolbridge.

There was much chatter in "The Lion" of the fancy dress dance at Cribourne Abbey. And at the bar I ran across a charming individual, a member of a stranded theatrical company (poor creature!—fancy being stranded at Christmas, my dear O'Grady!), who was very happy to sell me a make-up for a £5 note. (Ah, that was a slip on my part, though. I gave him one of Lund's notes, and later, when the police inquired, that put them on my track.)

But my make-up? Well, I wanted the costume of a Cavalier in grey. By the best of luck the actor had the very thing!

Because, you see, my friend, as a youngster I

served in the bank at Coolbridge, and I knew all about the ghost story of the Abbey. Many a time have I been there to attend on old man Twyss, who rented the place before your boisterous friend. Twyss would receive me in his study, and chat of his wretched securities while I sat and gazed on the painting of Sir Geoffrey Butland. (Eccentric creature, Sir Geoffrey must have been, O'Grady.) I think I know every detail of his costume more or less by heart.

Sir Geoffrey walked on Christmas Eve, they said. Well, I meant to take precious pains that he walked that evening, anyhow! There was my whole salvation.

You guess the rest? Or, since you are so very green, my friend, must I continue to the end? Well, briefly.

I know every short cut from Coolbridge to Cribourne Abbey. Off from "The Lion" I bolted with my costume nicely packed, and I reached the Abbey some two hours after you yourself had done. I changed in the kitchen garden, threw my old clothes down the well, crept round, and stole into the house, the living image of Sir Geoffrey. And I had not forgotten the old handkerchief story either. I had to make my nose bleed a good deal before I stained it red enough.

But I was safe from pursuit awhile. The police would not look for me among Ferguson's merry-makers.

My intention was to get away subsequently in your clothes. We are so much alike, you see, O'Grady.

But before dinner you very nearly surprised me by that oriel window. How did I play the part, eh? My wig, and the stony silence in which I received your question, and that ghastly handkerchief, put you off superbly. Certainly you failed to recognise your companion of the train.

But I was afraid that you might chatter of the encounter in the corridor, and send them searching. Bold measures were imperative. I *must* keep the deception up. You'd *got* to take me for a ghost, you see.

Between you and me, O'Grady, I rather relished that fun. I fancy I could not have resisted it in any case. I possess a humorous soul, my friend. But I trust that Mrs. Ferguson has recovered from her shock.

I hid again till after midnight. Then I meditated a visit to your hospitable self. But first, taking a peep outside to see if the coast were clear, I discovered that some inquisitive policemen were watching the house; they must have followed me at last from Coolbridge. Back I popped, and you, my dear ingenuous child, had left your door unbolted!

You know the rest. You simply *had*, my innocent, to be sent out by that window. You were my decoy duck, you see. And all fell out exactly as I hoped. The police, intelligent creatures, seized you, thinking they had me; and off you all went. So, an hour later, did I, quite unmolested. Really I can never be too grateful to you.

I kiss the hand of Mrs. Ferguson. I salute your boisterous friend. And I beg that you will never forget your obliged and obedient

SAMUEL VRIGHT

(or shall we say the Cavalier in Grey?).

Well, my holiday is done, and as you read these lines I shall be on the high seas, back to Chili. But I carry with me the gratifying reflection that my friend, Mr. Samuel Vright, was a little bit too previous when he ventured to send that letter to me. He fancied, when he wrote it, that he had got clean away. And so he might have done, had he resisted the impulse to crow over my greenness. He has lots of time now—in Dartmoor—to realise his mistake. For by means of that letter I traced him—I, myself—and succeeded in giving him into custody. They laugh loudest who laugh last, Mr. Samuel Vright.

THE END.

THE HIGHEST RAILWAY IN THE WORLD

THE highest point reached by any railway in the world is claimed to be on the Morococha branch of the Central Railway of Peru, a broad-gauge line operated by the Peruvian Corporation. It reaches a height of exactly 15,865 feet above sea level, poised upon the backbone of the continent. The highest railway station in the world is at Ticlio, the western portal of the Galera Tunnel, at a height of 15,665 feet above sea level. This is the junction of the Morococha branch with the main line.

BLACK EVANS

By R. S. Warren Bell.

Author of "Tales of Greyhouse," "J. O. Jones," etc.

Synopsis

A NEW head master, the Rev. E. H. Talbot, is appointed to Christ's College, Abbotsleigh, and with him he brings forty scholars from the private school which he formerly governed at Pageways. Though there is no open warfare this intrusion is deeply resented by the boys of Christ's College, particularly by Fewlass Evans ("Black Evans"), a wild, lawless Fifth Former of seventeen years, renowned for his strength and his excellence at Rugby football. Evans has already come into verbal conflict with a senior from Pageways named Norman, and he has also drawn to himself the unfavourable notice of the new head master.

During a game of Rugby football Black Evans collars a "Pagan" forward so roughly that he breaks his collar-bone. The new head master then announces that the school in future will play Association instead of Rugby football. Evans is "gated," and he spends his leisure time in writing what he calls a novel, entitled "Talbot the Tyrant," in which occur many uncomplimentary references to the head master.

By accident he gives this up in place of an imposition which the head master had set him. Evans had just been elected captain of football, and the head master now annuls the election, and appoints Norman, a prefect from Pageways, in his stead.

Norman, with another prefect, meets Evans out of bounds and smoking. Norman angers the Welshman, but their quarrel is interrupted by the appearance of a crowd of town hooligans. A combat follows between these and the collegians, and, through the fierce fighting of Evans, the townees are driven off. Norman expresses his thanks to the Welshman, but the latter merely shrugs his shoulders when the prefect remarks that, should he catch Evans smoking again, he will not overlook it.

CHAPTER XVI

CAPTAIN NORMAN

THE head master, as may be imagined, did not find it an easy matter to fill his football card. What with foreign matches, and home matches, and house matches, some of the schools he wrote to had hardly a date open. However, Mr. Talbot was a trier. The more disappointments he suffered the more he wrote to this school and that.

"I anticipated these difficulties," he said to Norman. "We shall not have many matches this season, I am afraid, but Pulborough ought to help us."

"Yes," said Norman; "after they see our game with Pulborough in the papers the other schools ought to come along."

The Head smiled.

"Well, Norman, although it looks as if we shall not have many opportunities of proving our mettle, we may as well prove to ourselves that we have *got* mettle. Don't spare any pains in coaching your team. Make them practise together."

"The first team is very ragged at present, sir," said Norman. "You see, I have to have a smattering of Christians in it, and they upset everything. There are several who promise to make very good players, as they have pace and weight, but they are taking a long time to pick the game up. No matter how much we

practise we shan't have enough time to get into anything like decent form to receive Pulborough."

The Head considered the situation.

"You mustn't be too sentimental," he said. "We are all one school now, and we must put our best eleven into the field. Don't give any Christian"—he used the word involuntarily—"his place if he isn't good enough. It's the best team we want, Norman—the best team."

"Very well, sir," said Norman, in a relieved tone. "Now I have your authority for acting as I think best, I shall leave sentiment entirely out of the question."

He had wished to do so all along, it may be added. In his heart of hearts he wanted to show Christ's College what a jolly good game Pageways School, with its despised Soccer, could put up even against a great combination like Pulborough. Christ's College had its Rugby glories of the past to cherish, but Pageways had had its triumphs too.

Christians would remind one another of that famous afternoon when the second fifteen of a Cambridge college opposed them, and was defeated by seventy-two points to nil. These Rugbeians even now laughed as they recollected that the Christ's three-quarters came to a sort of arrangement among themselves as to who should score the next try. And they remembered very vividly that by virtue of this licking the Cambridge college so trounced in the following season sent its first team, the very strongest team they could whip up, with three Blues in it.

Ah, yes! Those were the glorious old days for which the school now sighed! They were gone for ever. Then, too, that famous game against the crack London hospital which had eventually won the Hospital Cup! That was an afternoon, if you like! The ground just a sea of slush, with half a gale blowing all the time. What a game! Christ's won by a try scored in the last minute. It was a famous side, the side Christ's had that season, for it went from September to April without a beating, and two of its members were in the 'Varsity match the next December.

The Christians liked to rub these triumphs into their new companions, and the Pagans itched to prove their steel. After all, said the Pagans, a fellow couldn't help what code he played; it was chosen for him. All he could do was to be as good at it as possible.

Anyhow, the Pagans were going to have their chance now. Norman drew up a First Eleven *v.* the Rest. The notice-board had seen some vexed throngs that season, and when the school cast its eyes on the eleven picked for the trial game in question, it was very wroth, for Norman had dropped every Christian except Evans.

"What a beastly swindle!" said Carson to Dawson.

"Just like Norman's swank!" said Dawson. "Where's Selby? On the wing he's faster than any Pagan."

"Where's White? They said he was the only half-back that did any good against Malling's, and he's dropped."

The drift of these remarks reached Norman, but he did not take any notice. He was going to turn out his best side against Pulborough. Sentiment was not allowed to enter into the matter, and what he considered the best side was on the board. In the afternoon it was in the field, and by the end of the game it was "in the cart," because in a match of many goals the Rest won by five goals to four—a very surprising result, and a very annoying one to Norman, who, being one of those gentlemen possessed of a firm belief that they can do no wrong, had been sharply snubbed by this unpalatable result.

For in thinking that the Eleven would have matters much its own way, Norman had not taken properly into consideration the fact that the Rest numbered several Pagans who had come on very much since last football season. It is often the case that a change of locality improves a man beyond belief, not only in football but in other things. Several fellows who had not exactly distinguished themselves in the enervating climate of Pageways had displayed marked improvement in the more bracing air of Abbotsleigh.

The Pagans among the Rest had played a capital game. They had put more into their play than the Eleven had. They had rather felt being dumped down among the Rest, and they had played all the harder, because, being skilled Soccer players, they knew that the brunt of the work would fall on them. Then again, the Christians who composed the bulk of the Rest were most of them hefty players out of what had been the first fifteen, and if they had not played with much science they had exhibited a considerable amount of healthy vigour. Fear found no place in their dictionary. They had swept down upon the Eleven in a certain and determined manner. They had fought like Cromwell's Ironsides against Charles's dandies.

"Anyhow, their side had won; and they did it all in the second half, too. This was not surprising when it is taken into consideration that the Eleven scored three of their goals in the first half, and that after the interval they were evidently in a mood to take it easy, regarding their opponents as entirely at their mercy. And this was how the dogged Rest had come by their own, and scored five goals against the annoyed and surprised Eleven. In the last ten minutes the Eleven had bucked up and scored another goal, but in spite of their frantic efforts they couldn't even equalise, much less win.

It was a bitter blow to Norman, who, however, endeavoured to smile it off.

"The result, you see," he remarked, as he put his hand on the shoulder of Colebrook, who had captained the Rest, "shows our wisdom in playing this game. We wanted to discover the best side, and we know now that the side I picked isn't the best side."

"Oh," said Colebrook, "I thought you might—I'll think it was."

Norman tried to laugh.

"My dear Brookie"—they were quite good friends by now, these two—"there is no necessity for the sneer. I don't pretend to be infallible, though your remark suggests that I do. Besides, just remember that we didn't play the eleven I picked. We hadn't got Evans."

It was true. The side which Norman had chosen to represent the school didn't play as he had picked it, for at the last moment, owing to the non-appearance of Evans, a man had to be drawn from the Rest to fill his place, and some fellow from the second game hastily requisitioned to fill the gap in the Rest. Evans did not play, nor did he witness the game. Everybody noticed and commented on his absence.

When he had changed, Norman made his way to the head prefect's study. He found Colebrook already at work. If grinding could do it Colebrook intended to win that scholarship at Cambridge in December, and so make certain of his future. The scholarship gained, his last two terms at school—for he would not take up the scholarship until the following October—would be a pleasant round of games, leavened by just enough work to keep his hand in. There are few pleasanter periods in a man's life than his last term or two at school when his 'Varsity career is assured, especially when it is assured as a result of his own efforts.

"Hope I'm not interrupting, Brookie," observed Norman, in his most friendly way.

"No, of course you're not," said Colebrook, pointing to a chair.

Norman sat down.

"The subject is Evans," he informed Colebrook.

Colebrook looked thoughtful. "Didn't play to-day. We must see to that. I'll speak to him about it, if you like."

"My dear Brookie," drawled Norman, with his hands behind his head, "*how* shall you speak to him about it?"

"I shall tell him that when he is down to play he must play."

"Do you think Evans will mind that?"

"I think so," said Colebrook. "He's been in the habit of having his own way here, you see. I must remind him that times are changed."

Norman stood up, and leaned against the mantelpiece.

"Times are very much changed," he agreed. "Times are so much changed that in my opinion a mere talking to is no good whatever with that fellow."

"What do you propose to do, then?" asked Colebrook.

"Well, the rule is that if a fellow doesn't play he must come before the Sixth, and I propose that the rule be now enforced. It is written up on the board plainly enough, and you may be sure that Evans knows about it."

"Yes, yes," said Colebrook; "that is the rule all right, but doesn't it occur to you that Evans is what they call in shops an 'out' size?"

"I don't care what size he is," said Norman. "He's been in the habit of having his own way here, and thinks he can continue to have it. But I propose to show him he can't."

"He must come before the Sixth, then, you think?"

"Certainly," replied Norman. "Drop him a line, or send him a message to that effect, will you?"

"All right," said Colebrook, and Norman walked out.

Colebrook didn't think he would send a message, as it was possible the messenger might bring a reply of hardly a civil nature. Instead, he wrote to Evans in his little, Greek-like handwriting. The note was not unfriendly; with palpable regret he pointed out to Evans that he had broken a rule, and must therefore abide by the consequences; that, in fact, he must come before the Sixth Form after chapel.

Colebrook despatched the note by Corporal Freeman during prep. The corporal stalked

into Big School, and, explaining his errand to the master on duty, shuffled to the spot where Evans sat, and handed the missive to him with words of military precision and distinctness: "From the head prefect, sir."

Everybody saw Freeman give the note to Evans, many heard the servant's words, and ordered to appear before the Sixth, and he knew what that meant. This, so far, was the biggest check he had received during his school career.

He considered the situation. If he didn't go, what would happen? Sure as a gun he would be reported to the Head, and, coming on the

"Times are very much changed," said Norman. "The rule must be enforced; I shall tell Evans so."

the majority of fellows guessed their import. Evans was to go before the Sixth for not turning out at footer that afternoon!

A thrill ran round Big School. This was an "excite," if you like!

top of a lot of other things, that would mean the sack.

He was the object of universal scrutiny. Everybody seemed to know that he had to go before the Sixth after chapel. Evans felt that he was filling the picture a little too thoroughly. Although fond of having his own way, he was quite a modest fellow, and never cared to pose in the limelight, especially the sort of limelight he was posing in now.

After chapel he went to his class-room, and sat down at his desk. So far he had not decided what he would do. For what it came to was

CHAPTER XVII

BEFORE THE SIXTH

FOR once, by way of a change, Evans was not attentive in chapel that night. He saw that he was in a very tight place, and couldn't help thinking of it. He had been

this: To go before the Sixth meant a licking, and as it was impossible for him to submit to such an indignity, it looked as if he would have to fight the lot single-handed. Although having little doubt that he would give a good account of himself, he knew that he was bound to get well hammered. It wasn't as if they were a set of weaklings. What was to be done? It was a perplexing situation. The minutes passed, and he still sat gnawing his knuckles and lost in cogitation.

Meanwhile the prefects had assembled in full force, and they didn't look as if the present occasion were at all to their liking. Several of the Christian prefects were against having Evans up before them. For one thing, they were well aware of the Welshman's temper; for another, they heartily disliked Norman's arbitrary methods.

Arrowsmith voiced the sentiments of this section in his own way.

"I think we ought to strain a point for Evans," he said. "He's sulking. Any man who had just been put down from skippering the team would feel sulky. Besides, what are we to do with him when we've got him here? If we try to whack him he'll go mad."

"It occurs to me," retorted Greatheart, a Pagan prefect and Norman's particular chum, "that we shall have no peace with Evans till we *do* take a strong line with him. He's got his knife into us *and* Talbot, and intends to play the goat till he's sacked—which event isn't a long way off, I should say."

"Speaking for myself, I think it's as well there's somebody in the school who won't take all Talbot's beastly new-fangled ideas lying down," retorted Arrowsmith, warmly.

"Spare us your views, do," cried Greatheart. "Keep them for a *Collegian* editorial."

"It will, at any rate, read as well as the tradesmen's advertisements you touted for at Pageways," said Arrowsmith, icily.

For Greatheart had conducted the bi-termly organ issued at Pageways School, and some Pagan had favoured Arrowsmith with a glance at several copies of that now defunct periodical. It had enjoyed a very limited circulation, and Greatheart, in order to make ends meet, had resorted to the desperate and always-to-be deprecated expedient of inserting advertisements from the school's favourite athletic outfitter, stationer, and pastrycook.

Greatheart turned angrily on Arrowsmith, smiling serenely over the effect of his home-thrust, and it looked as if trouble might ensue when Norman eased the situation by switching the conversation back to the business of the evening.

"Shut up, you chaps! What on earth's the good of wrangling like kids? Let's concentrate on the Evans matter." He had been sitting at his desk, looking over some work. Now he got up and approached the seniors grouped about the master's desk. "I hate this job as much as any of you," he declared. "I can't say I like Evans—I don't see how anybody could like such a man—but I don't bear him any ill-will. In fact, if anything, I am in his debt, because he pulled a couple of cads off me last Sunday. Still, rules are rules. Evans didn't turn out to-day, and he offered no excuse. You may be sure that if he had offered any excuse I should have accepted it, as I don't want to treat a fellow who has got his trial county cap as if he were a kid of twelve. But he simply does nothing—doesn't play, doesn't explain why he doesn't play. It is sheer defiance, and it is only right that he should come before us."

"And here he is, my man," said a voice from the doorway, and Evans stood before them.

The Sixth felt that the case was in the hands of Colebrook, and waited for him.

Looking exceedingly uncomfortable, the head prefect plunged into his task.

"We want to know why you didn't turn out for football this afternoon, Evans. You know the rule. It is highly unpleasant for us to ask you in here, but we require some explanation."

Evans had got up from his seat in the Lower Fifth class-room and strode off to the Sixth in a defiant mood. What did he care for these chaps? He would let them know plainly that there were exceptions to every rule. But as Colebrook spoke to him in his mild voice, the Welshman cooled down. He couldn't help sympathising with Colebrook's position.

As the head prefect concluded, he took a few paces forward. Disregarding Colebrook, he faced Norman.

"I'll tell you why I didn't turn out. It wasn't because I'm not willing to play this new game, and it wasn't because I wanted to defy the prefects; but it was because the team was not Christ's College. I was the only Christian in it. Look you"—with a declamatory wave of his hand, telling more of the blood that was in him than any words could do—"that was my reason."

"It was the best team the school could put up," said Norman, coldly.

"Five to four against you!"

"The best team I thought the school could put up," explained Norman. "I've got to get together the best side I can to meet Pulborough. The Christians don't know the game yet, and so naturally the best side must consist almost entirely of Pageways fellows."

Evans had strolled towards the fireplace while Norman had been speaking. Now he wheeled round angrily.

"Confound Pulborough! What does it matter about Pulborough?"

"It matters a lot," said Norman. "It is the greatest stroke of luck we could possibly have, getting this match with Pulborough, and if we put up a decent game against them we shall fill our card all right next season."

"We don't want Pageways to play for us," said Evans, roughly.

Norman was calmness personified.

"You've got to let us *show* you how to play, then," he replied.

The colour mounting in his dark face, Evans strode to within half a yard of where Norman was standing.

"Look here, my pretty fellow, let me tell you this," he thundered. "If you play an entirely Pageways side against Pulborough, we'll hoot you off the field. And you can go and tell your head master so! It doesn't matter how bad we are—our team ought to have as much Christ's College as Pageways in it!"

Norman was white.

"The school," he said, slowly, "is going to turn out its best team against Pulborough, and that team was on the board to-day."

"Well, look you," sneered Evans, "Pulborough will be a little bit better than the Rest!"

"Let me remind you," replied Norman, very quietly, "that the Eleven lacked its right full-back. I fancy you would have made a considerable difference to our side, Evans. And it was because you absented yourself that we have asked you to favour us with your company. So let's get on with it."

"Indeed, yes," said Evans, his hands deep in his pockets. "And now, what are you going to do with me?"

There was an awkward pause.

The Sixth, feeling that the critical moment had arrived, looked towards Colebrook, who, poor fellow, was turning now red, now white, in his perplexity.

But it was Norman who replied:—

"You're going to be lammed for not playing."

"Lam away," said Evans.

He had hardly uttered the words when Colebrook took the very front of the field. As the head prefect spoke, Norman seemed to sink naturally into the second place.

"Look here, Evans, a rule is a rule. You didn't turn out to play, and you have the choice of two courses—you've got to take a licking from us, or be sent to the Head."

Evans, though surprised by the firm attitude Colebrook had suddenly adopted, was thinking very quickly. He was already knee deep in the Head's bad books. He didn't want to leave just yet; but without a doubt this would prove the finishing touch to his school career. He had openly defied the school authorities, for the prefects, after all, represented the Head. But it was impossible for him to submit to a licking from the Sixth.

Somehow, he must carry it off with a high hand. He brushed aside Colebrook, and faced Norman.

"Look you," he cried, "as captain of footer it is your place to report me to the Man. But if you do, look out for yourself!" And without waiting for an answer he turned swiftly on his heel, snatched open the door, and departed.

Perplexity in their faces, the prefects were staring in an undecided way at each other, when of all people in the school Corporal Freeman insinuated his long form into the room.

"What do you want, corporal?" asked Colebrook, sharply.

"Beg your pardon, gentlemen," replied Freeman, "but will you come at once, please? The whole place is upside down."

"What do you mean?"

"Will you come and see for yourself, sir?" replied Freeman, in an agitated tone. "They've simply gone mad upstairs—stark, raving mad!"

CHAPTER XVIII

CHRISTIANS *v.* PAGANS

HITHERTO the relations between the Christians and Pagans, which at the beginning of the term had promised to be anything but amicable, had remained quiescent. Possibly the Christians were feeling too much annoyed with the new head master to entertain violent animus against the boys he had brought with him. There had, of course, been a few skirmishes, as on the night before the election of football captain, but nothing serious had occurred

But now things had come to a head. It was now possible to allege a distinct grievance against the leading Pagan. Norman, in drawing up the school eleven, had included only one Christian in it. This was an undoubted insult.

The Pagans did not mend matters by the air of superiority they assumed. When taxed with Norman's partiality they loftily replied that the football skipper was perfectly right. He had picked the best eleven, with possibly one exception—Evans.

This declaration on the part of a Pagan evoked a howl of wrath from a group of Christians. How could it be possible for Evans to be the one weak spot in the team? The Pagan who made this daring assertion simply shrugged his shoulders.

"He may know a bit about Soccer," he said, "but you can't deny that Rugger has been his regular game. Therefore, he can't be such a useful back as a fellow who has played nothing but Soccer."

"So," said Carson, confronting the speaker, whose name was Bromage, "you admit that your precious Norman has made a mistake?"

"Boy, I shall report you to the Head," added Dawson.

"I am not saying anything against Norman," replied Bromage, stoutly. "I'm saying that if there's a weak spot in the team it's Evans."

"You fellows from Pageways take the bun," said Carson. "There is absolutely nothing wrong with you. Malling's scored three nil against a side with seven Pagans in it, and then you say you're immaculate!"

"Boy, you stand confessed an idiot," observed Dawson in an excellent imitation of the Head's familiar tones.

"And a perverter of the truth," added Carson, with his face very close to Bromage's.

"Say that again and I'll smack your head," said Bromage.

"Smack away," retorted Carson, cautiously retiring a step or two.

Bromage lunged at him angrily, and Carson lunged back; but at this point Colebrook, passing, called out, "Shut up that, you fellows!" with the result that hostilities were for the moment suspended.

But only suspended. During the rest of the day there were frequent hot arguments between Pagans and Christians on the subject of the team which Norman had "built." The Pagans naturally supported their man as heartily as the Christians condemned him. The general opinion of the Christians seemed to be that until the school was strong enough to play a Soccer team composed of as many Christians as Pagans it would be as well for it not to play any matches at all.

Had it not been for this unlucky game the fusion of the two schools might have gone on quite smoothly through the term, and after the Christmas holidays the Christians would have come back thoroughly reconciled to the new order of things. But this game, or rather the difference of opinion aroused by it, had set a yawning gulf between the two parties.

Another circumstance making for disorder that night was the absence of the prefects from the dormitories while the fellows were getting into bed.

There was no prefect in Twenty-Four—Evans being away on his own business; and there was no prefect in Seventeen, on the floor above. Curiously enough, the prefect of this dormitory was Norman.

And so, knowing that Norman would be absent on business affecting their own chief, Carson and Dawson, followed by the other fellows in Twenty-Four—Verrey, fired by curiosity, bringing up the tail—repaired to the landing above to interview the supporters of Norman, and in especial Bromage.

Carson, no great warrior, was not exactly thirsting for Bromage's blood; but he couldn't stand Dawson's taunts. He would have liked the matter to be forgotten, but his chum would not allow it.

"You don't mean to say you're going to let a freckled bounder like that hit you, and not have his blood?" expostulated Dawson when Carson seemed to be hanging back. "You must kill him, man."

The other Christians in Twenty-Four echoing this sentiment, Carson at length expressed his willingness to seek out the foe.

"We'd better be slippy, or Black Evans will be up," said Dawson.

Thus the procession had started.

As they passed the doors of other dormitories; Dawson was careful to let their destination be known, and not only Christians but Pagans as well augmented the party.

Dawson didn't intend to let his chum back out now that they were on the road, and kept a tight grip on his arm. Thus they wended their way up the worn, bare stairs to the landing above.

Most of the fellows in Seventeen were in bed when the head of the procession entered the room. The sub-prefect of the dormitory, one

"Bromage! Bromage!" shouted the Pagans. "Carson! Carson!" came the answering war-cry, and a battle-royal began. A Pagan picked up one of the rival faction and sent him sprawling on the floor.

Anderson, was sitting on the edge of his bed reading a book. He looked up with an air of surprise.

"What do you fellows want?" he demanded.

"Satisfaction," said Dawson.

"Rot! What do you mean? Get out!"

"In this bedroom," continued Dawson, not a whit disturbed by the other's imperious manner, "there resides a malignant called Bromage. He and Carson had words this afternoon; Carson is here to continue them."

Bromage, who was just getting into bed, slipped into his trousers. He saw that the day's work was not yet over.

"Ah, there's Bromage!" cried Dawson, lightly. "Good evening, Bromage."

Fellows from all the dormitories were hurrying in, Christians and Pagans hustling each other in the hurly-burly of excitement. The news had gone round that there was a fight between Carson and Bromage. It seemed almost too good to be true.

Anyhow, the prefects being absent downstairs, and sub-prefects being persons who might be ignored on occasion—not to mention the fact that several of the sub-prefects had themselves strolled along to witness the fun—most of the school was now wending its way in the direction of Seventeen, which meant that the first and second floors were quickly stripped of all inhabitants except a few trembling new boys, who, thankful for a few moments' peace, remained cowering between the sheets.

"Look here!" shouted Anderson, irritably; "get out of here, all you fellows!"

But although he stormed and gesticulated the crowd continued to pour in.

"Don't push," cried Dawson. "Form a ring, gentlemen. It's Bromage and Carson, not the whole school. Come on, Bromage. Here's your man. Go it, Carson!"

The Christians took up the shout, naming their champion, "Carson! Carson!"

And the Pagans replied, "Bromage! Bromage! Kill him, Bromage!"

Anderson fought his way through the mob to the principal actors.

"Look here," he said to Dawson, "you're at the bottom of this. Get out!" And seizing Dawson, he tried to push him towards the door. But Dawson, Rugby footballer, collared Anderson round the knees and upset him.

As he did this a Pagan gave him a thrust under the arm with his bare foot and sent him sprawling, and this Pagan in turn was seized by a Christian and hurled on to the top of the other two.

The original cause of the hubbub in Seventeen was now forgotten, Carson and Bromage being divided by a seething multitude. Christians and Pagans were glaring at one another. New comers, pushing their way in through the doorway, made matters worse by hurling Christian against Pagan, and Pagan against Christian. It was impossible for the sub-prefects present to restore any kind of order.

No sooner had Anderson got up than he was pushed down again. Dawson and the fellow who had shoved him over were fighting in an undignified way upon the floor, the fellows who kept streaming into the room falling over them and barking their knees and noses.

Some stentorian voice raised a shout of "Down with the Pagans!" and the cry was taken up furiously.

The Pagans were outnumbered by three to one, and their answering cry seemed feeble in comparison.

Each Christian turned towards his neighbour, and if that neighbour were a Pagan, clutched him by the throat. In a trice a score of single combats were in progress.

Suddenly a voice rose amid the din, and it came from a head which towered high above the mob. It was the head of Corporal Freeman.

"Stop all this, please, or I'll report it!" cried the corporal.

A yell of "Down with Fat Frank!" was the only response—Corporal Freeman was not popular.

"Stop it, I say!" cried the corporal, and at that moment a large sponge, well soaked, caught him full between the eyes.

Spluttering and gasping, he beat a hasty retreat; but not before another sponge, also heavy with water, had found the nape of his long neck.

"The prefects!" shouted a Pagan. "He's gone to fetch the prefects!"

Dawson had struggled up by this time.

"Who cares for the prefects!" He was now careless of danger; war shone in his eyes. "Come on! Let's go and meet them!"

The Christians present raised a whoop of delight.

There were nearly a hundred of them, and they had the confidence bred of numbers. They swept through the doorway to meet the prefects or anybody else who might oppose them.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SENTENCE

EVANS, on leaving the Sixth Form room, went straight to his dormitory, taking no notice whatever of the distant sounds of strife. The fact that his own dormitory was empty didn't seem to trouble him at all. He undressed rapidly, and, getting into bed, in spite of the turmoil humming about his ears, was soon fast asleep.

The prefects, on receiving Corporal Freeman's summons, went upstairs in a body. The foremost of them—a Pagan who told a group of junior Christians to "Shut up!"—was promptly floored, then carried to the nearest bath-room, flung into the bath, and held down while the cold water tap was turned on him, and kept there until, gasping and soaked, he managed to make his escape.

Numbers can do anything. The other prefects were openly defied.

If from verbal they proceeded to physical remonstrance they were thrown down and sat on. Some of them, that is; no one molested Colebrook. Feeling rough hands clutching him, Norman lashed out savagely. A lanky boy in the Fourth, pale and half stunned, staggered against the wall. The Pagan had forgotten how hard he could hit. No one else touched him, and he was careful after that not to hit anyone.

In one of the bigger dormitories the rebels formed a long line, each clasping the coat of the fellow in front of him, and in this array marched round and round the washstands in the centre of the room, shouting and singing, and hooting defiance at the prefect who tried to break the line.

The baths having been plugged, the water, hot and cold, was turned on, and soon there was a stream in each corridor; Colebrook, Norman, and the other prefects having to wade through the water to turn the taps off.

And all this time the Rev. Edmund Talbot sat in his study, with his face, white and set, between his hands. He came of a business stock, and prided himself on being a business man. When appointed head of Christ's College he had determined to run the old school on business lines, for it had been suggested to him by the governors that its former chief, though a worthy man, had been a little easy-going, leaving the conduct of the place largely to the prefects. It had not been mentioned to him at the same time that the old chief, owing to the loftiness of his character and the high breeding that showed itself in all his actions, was a man held in the highest respect by the boys under him. The Old Christians always spoke of him with pride. His cognomen, the Man, was a compliment. In his heart of hearts the old chief had been prouder of this nickname than of any of the various distinctions he had won in his early manhood.

To him had succeeded Edmund Talbot, the business man, who had entered the college in the spirit of a general manager who is appointed to pull together some firm which has begun to show signs of decay. The rule of a man like this is ruthless. Old servants are expelled through no fault of their own, but because they are representatives of a period of lax government; struggling young married men are thrown upon the world; homes are desolated. And Mr. Talbot was adopting precisely similar tactics, the only difference in this case being that the old servants of the firm were masters, and the young servants boys of the elder type—boys who were just budding into manhood.

Well, according to his lights, he was doing the right thing. He was not one to run about asking other people whether this or that innovation were advisable. With him, to think was to do. If he did wrong, he would have to suffer. He knew this, and was willing to take his gruel.

His butler, King, who had been at the school twenty-five years, had come in with a white face. Already Mr. Talbot had marked this man down for early dismissal. Though somewhat partial to the delights of the pantry, King was a good servant of the old type, but good and long service were nothing to the new Head. To him King was simply an emblem of the school's decadence.

"Begging your pardon, sir," said the butler, "there's fearful goings-on upstairs. The young gentlemen seem to have got out of hand."

"Inform the master on duty—Mr. Carter," the Head had replied, sharply.

King withdrew hastily, but before he hied abroad to seek Mr. Carter he informed his fellow domestics that the head master's face was a "sight."

As it happened, Mr. Carter, with other masters, had gone over to Colles' House for a game of cards. He had delegated his last half-hour's duty to Mr. Hoffmeyer, the foreign languages master. But Mr. Hoffmeyer had found a pleasant fire burning in his bed-sitting room, and, having sat down by it for a few moments' repose, was fast asleep. Mr.

Hoffmeyer was a Teuton of massive build, and slept soundly.

Wandering up to the first floor in search of Mr. Carter, King ran into a party of malcontents, who promptly formed a circle and danced round him. The old manservant was helpless. He could only gesticulate wildly, and beg them to behave themselves. He might as well have talked to so many foxhound pups. As soon as they let him go he retreated to the servants' quarters. For a full half-hour afterwards the shouting and horseplay continued. Then the riot gradually subsided, and the rioters slunk away to bed.

On the following morning the school settled down to its work quietly enough, and the masters, who had been informed of the outbreak, told each other that the ebullition of spirit on the previous night had been a mere flash in the pan.

All went well during the morning. The only sign of anything unusual being afoot was the palpable boycotting of Norman. Any Christian spoken to by him appeared to have been afflicted with sudden deafness. When he approached a chattering group there was an immediate stoppage in the conversation, while a battery of eyes was turned coldly upon him. Only the Christian prefects held any intercourse with him.

Though the rebellious Christians held up their heads defiantly, they were secretly in a state of some alarm as to what the Head would say when the whole school met in Big School at half-past twelve.

The prefects and masters, too, were wondering what course the Head would adopt. Such proceedings could not be overlooked.

The Head, as was shortly seen, had his programme fully mapped out. When the detention list had been read out, he explained that programme.

"Last night," he said, quietly, "a number of you, I have been informed, set at defiance law and order, and besides making a great deal of noise, committed a considerable amount of damage. Windows were broken, and a number of basins and jugs smashed. With the exception of the prefects, the whole school will be gated for a week, and the damage will be paid for out of the school's pocket-money."

He paused. Carson and Dawson, and others who had been moving spirits in the mischief, heaved a sigh of relief. A week's gating would soon pass. The pocket-money being stopped was a nuisance, but they had had a good deal of fun for it.

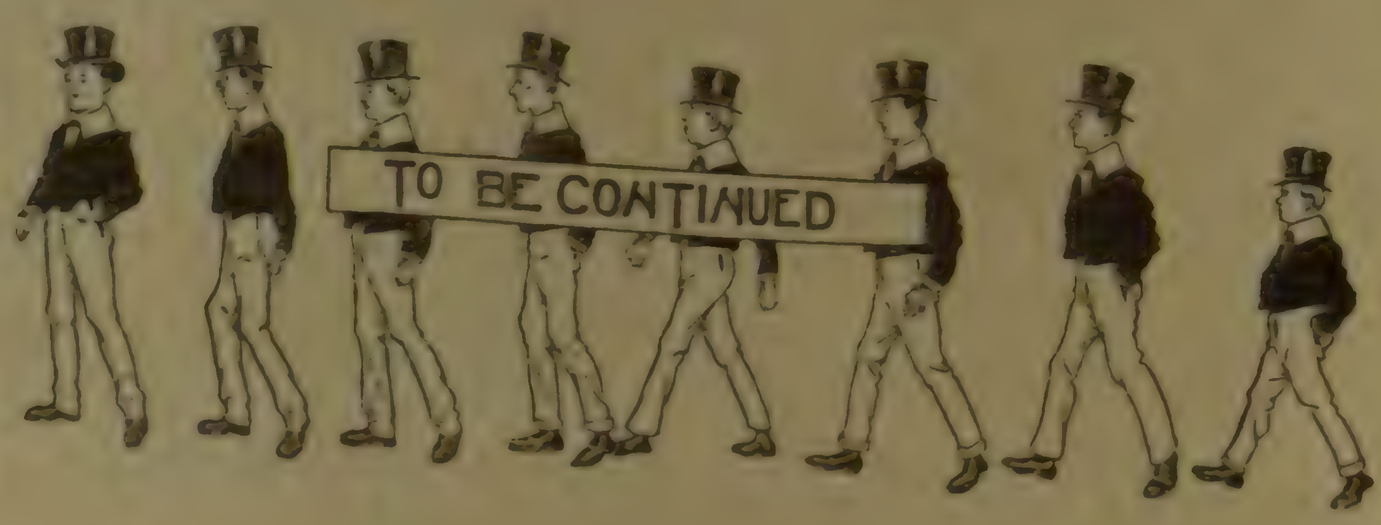
The Head picked up his papers. "The school is dismissed."

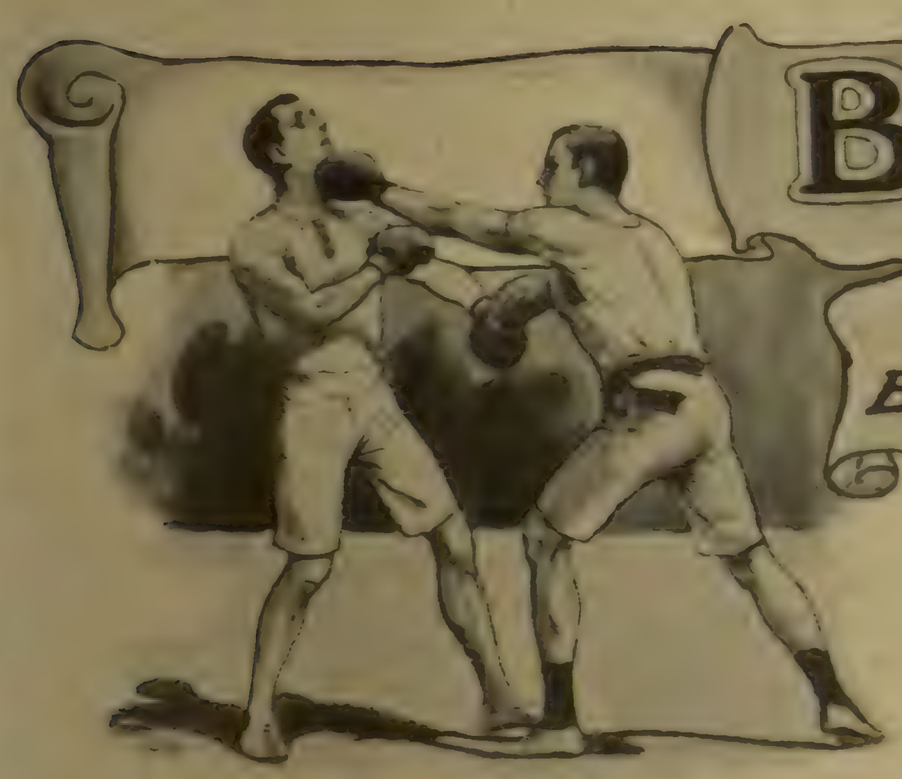
The school, surprised by the Head's calmness, went out in very orderly fashion. They had expected at least a long speech condemning the outrageous scenes of the previous night; they had expected to hear an appeal to their finer feelings; they were prepared to listen to a quarter of an hour's eloquence.

Nothing of the kind. A week's gating, and the plumber's bill to be footed by themselves. Nothing else. No harangue. They were dumbfounded, and trailed into the open like lambs.

Meanwhile, Evans was awaiting a summons to the Head's study. He knew Norman had reported him—Colebrook had told him so. Now to foot *his* bill! But no summons arrived. He was left free as the air. No lengthy imposition kept him within doors. He looked up apprehensively whenever Corporal Freeman entered the room he might be sitting in. But no message came from the Head. And after that, as the days went by, the Head gave no sign that he was even aware of his existence.

And Evans felt uncomfortable, for he knew that the Head was the last man in the world to forget him.





BOXING FOR BOYS

By A. L. CHAMPNEYS

(Third Article.)

A Splendid New Series of Practical and Instructive Articles by the Famous Heavyweight Champion of Oxford University in 1899, 1900, and 1901

Right-handed Hits

THE use of the right hand in boxing is quite different to that of the left; and, as has been pointed out in the previous article, it is never correct to lead with the right. The main reason for this is that, if you are standing in a correct attitude, with your left hand and foot in advance of the right, your opponent comes within range of your left fist while he is still out of reach of the right. The latter is therefore only used at comparatively close quarters, and even so your right foot must be brought further forward than the position shown in Diagram No. 3 in the last article before a right-hand blow is landed, though it should, of course, be somewhat behind the left. Thus, if you follow up your left lead with your right hand you must bring your right foot up further after your lead than you should if you were going to let loose another left.

Whether the hit is aimed at the body or head the fist should travel straight for its mark, without any preliminary drawing back, the right shoulder, of course, going with it, and the impetus of the blow coming as with a left-hander from the toe of the right foot. No doubt, when you are standing in the correct position it will occur to you you cannot send your right fist straight to your opponent's head or body without first drawing it back, and this is perfectly true. But as the right hand only follows a left lead, you never hit with the right from the original position. At the end of a left lead your right shoulder is well back in relation to the left, and the right forearm points straight towards your opponent, and though your right foot must be brought forward before your blow lands, your hand and shoulder really travel from the position in which they are left after your lead, and are not brought back over the mark between the two blows.

The left arm should be drawn back as the right goes forward, and the left glove should cover the mark, which would be otherwise left unprotected. Owing to the fact that right-handed hits can only be delivered at a closer range than is necessary for left-handers, they very frequently reach their mark before the arm is fully extended. Now, if your fist lands while your arm is still bent, the force of the blow is entirely nullified unless the muscles of arm and hand are rigid at the moment of contact. When your arm straightens the muscles become more or less automatically taut, but if your hit lands before your arm is straight the muscles must be rigid at the moment the blow lands, and neither before nor after. Otherwise the power of the blow is wasted; and this applies to all hits with the arm bent however slightly

When, as is usually the case, the muscles of the right arm are more fully developed than those of the left, the former is the more effective for all blows delivered with a bent arm, and this will be further dealt with under the head of "in-fighting."

These right-handers at head and body are second in importance only to the left leads, and should be practised assiduously. As has been already explained, they should always immediately follow a left lead and you should practise them in every possible combination; for instance, lead with the left at the head and follow with right to the body; or left to body and right to head; or left and right to the same mark.

It must, however, be remembered that a left lead need not be followed by a right, as very often another left is the best way to follow up your lead. Though the choice of blows is in almost every case directed by experience, the decision in this instance should obviously depend mainly on the distance separating you from your adversary after your lead.

Before proceeding to the subject of "in-fighting," however, it will be well to refer briefly to the subject of right-handed feints.

Although it is under no conditions justifiable to lead with the right, there is no harm in making your opponent think you are going to commit that solecism; and very frequently a slight drawing back of the right hand will trap him into leaving himself open or "showing his hand" in some way; possibly the more because the pretended move is a weak one, and you may find a nice opening for your left as a result of the strategy.

In-fighting

The hits known as "hooks" should not properly be included under this head, as they would, perhaps, be more correctly placed intermediately between those used in "out-fighting" and those used in "in-fighting." They are, however, distinctly "bent-arm" hits, and as such will be described under the present heading. When your opponent is too near to allow of your hitting him with the arm fully extended you are obliged to hit with a bent arm, and the direction of your blow will be difficult

from what it would be were he in the right place for a straight hit.

For instance, in Diagram 4 the dotted line which indicates the direction of the left forearm and foot of one boxer shows that a straight blow would land on his opponent's face. In Diagram 5, however, where the boxers are at much closer range, a straight blow would go over his shoulder.

In this case a "hook" hit with a bent arm would be necessary, the left fist following the direction of the arrow. These hooks may be at either body or head, and may be made with either hand, but, as has been already said, the effect depends, as with all bent-arm hits, on the rigidity of the muscles at the moment of landing the blow.

In addition to those hooks which are inclined to left or right, there are those which are inclined upwards.

These, which are known as upper-cuts, are very deadly hits, but require great accuracy of "timing", and are very easily missed. They are often used at very close quarters, that is in "in-fighting" proper, more especially in the case of those aimed at the body, and they will be fully dealt with below. It is impossible to draw a hard and fast line between "out-fighting" and "in-fighting," but it is, of course, obvious that the angle at which the arm is bent, when you hit, varies with the distance separating your opponent from yourself.

Fig 4.

When you are at really close quarters you must be prepared to hit alternately with either hand, and as there is no room for your opponent to deliver a straight hit you need mainly to protect yourself from those he aims at the sides of your head or body. Your right foot should therefore be brought up level with your left, your head held rather forward so as to be protected by your arms, and you should hit with left and right alternately, as quickly as possible, either at head or body, the arms being held for the most part rigid, and the movement coming mainly from the wrist and shoulders.

Your endeavour, when at close quarters, should be to keep so close to your opponent as to get your arms inside his so that his blows land on your elbows and shoulders only, while your head should be bent rather forward so as to be well protected by them. Under such circumstances quick hitting is essential, and you must be ready to get back instantaneously to the ordinary position the moment your opponent gets away from you, since the position for "in-fighting" is obviously an unsafe one as soon as you are open to a straight hit or an upper cut.

Besides the right and left half-arm hits at body and head there is another "close-quarters" blow, the "upper-cut." Upper-cuts are generally delivered either as the boxers are getting to close quarters or as they are getting away again. Once there you want the sides of your body or head to have the protection of your elbows, and upper-cuts do not afford them this.

The upper-cut at the head should land under the chin of your opponent, and should be delivered with the muscles taut, as all other half-arm hits. It may be given with either left or right. The upper-cut at the body should, of course, be aimed at the mark, and it is generally the knuckles of the third and little fingers which do the damage. This blow is usually delivered at a closer range than the upper-cut at the head, and its direction is not so near the vertical as in the case of the first mentioned. Also the left hand is less often used for this blow than for the corresponding blow at the head. This blow is not always recognised as an upper-cut, and, as has been said, its direction is not actually vertical. Half-arm blows at the body at close quarters usually land on the ribs, but if the mark is aimed at an upward direction should be given to the fist, or the blow as likely as not will miss altogether.

It may be pointed out here that it is against the rules to hold your opponent either to prevent his hitting you or for any other purpose. This is a fact of which many professional boxers, especially those who hail from America, appear to be completely ignorant, and their surprise when information on the point is imparted to them by the referee would be amusing if it were not pathetic. There have been one or two so-called world's champions who literally have no notion of the rudiments of boxing, but who invariably manage to get so inextricably entangled with their opponents that the latter, however good boxers they may be, have no chance of exhibiting their skill, while a good deal often takes place, unseen by the referee, during the processes of entanglement and disentanglement which will be neither described nor illustrated in these articles. All this "clinching" business has, more or less, ousted legitimate "in-fighting" from professional boxing, and what is left is hardly ever more than a prelude to a hugging match. Such tactics, it is to be hoped, will never find favour with amateurs, and when you have had enough of a rally at close quarters you should spring quickly back, using a straight left counter if in danger from the move.

Fig. 5.

Counters and Cross-Counters

Counters and cross-counters really belong both to attack and defence. The principal of them is to prevent your opponent's blow from landing by landing one yourself before his reaches you.

For instance, if your opponent hits with his right the extra quickness of your left may enable you to put your left to his face before his right glove reaches its mark. This left cross-counter to the head is perhaps the most useful of all this class of hits, and you should practise it whenever you see an opening.

It differs from the lead with the left in that the force of the counter is mainly that of resistance to the impetus of your opponent. Your left arm is, of course, straightened exactly as in leading, and the left shoulder is advanced, but not necessarily the left foot. In fact, some of the best exponents of this blow draw back the left foot when countering with the left.

(Another article next month.)

LAST SET OF PICTURES.

Our Great Football Competition

First Prize: A Magnificent Bicycle.
(From Messrs. RUDGE-WHITWORTH.)

Second Prize: Goods to the Value of Three Guineas.
(From Messrs. A. W. GAMAGE.)

AND TWENTY SPECIAL CONSOLATION PRIZES.

On this page appear nine pictures, each of which represents the name of a well-known football club, Rugby or Association, in the British Isles. You are asked to find out which club each picture stands for.

In the November and December numbers the first two sets were published. The pictures on this page make the last set, so when you have solved as many as you can, send in your list of answers to "Football Competition," THE CAPTAIN, 8, Southampton Street, Strand, W.C. The last day for receiving answers is Saturday, January 20th, 1912.

To each of the pictures a certain number of marks has been allotted for the correct solution. The competitor who gains the greatest number of marks will win the first prize. If there is a picture you cannot solve, do not hesitate to send in your other answers, for other competitors may make mistakes too.

You are not asked to cut out the page. All you need do is to send a list of answers, *in the correct order*, on a sheet of paper. With your answers you must send *three* competition coupons—one each for November, December, and January. The coupons will be found on the Prizes Page in the advertisement pages. One solution only must be given to each picture. Any infringement of this rule will mean disqualification. But if you wish to have two tries, you must send in another *complete* list of answers, with a coupon attached to all.

In the event of a tie neatness may be considered in awarding the prizes, and the Editor's decision must be accepted as final. You can only enter the competition on condition that you accept his ruling in every respect.

Read the rules carefully, and get your friends to help you solve the pictures. Any breach of the rules will mean disqualification. Remember that no answers can be received after January 20th, 1912.

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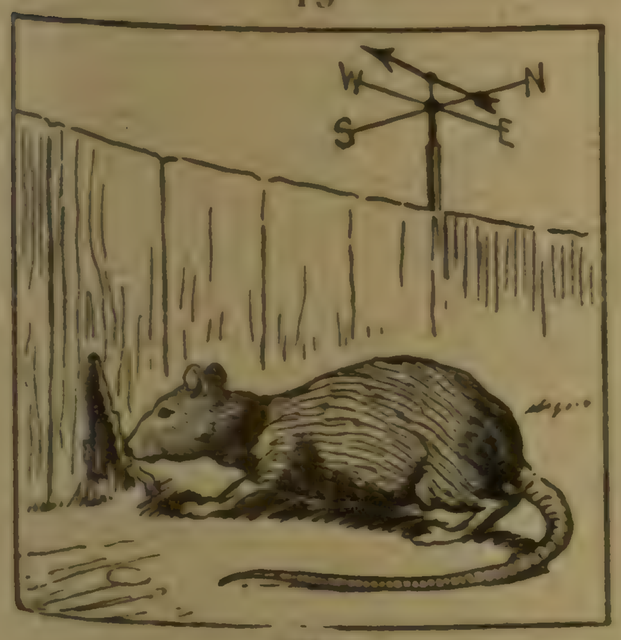

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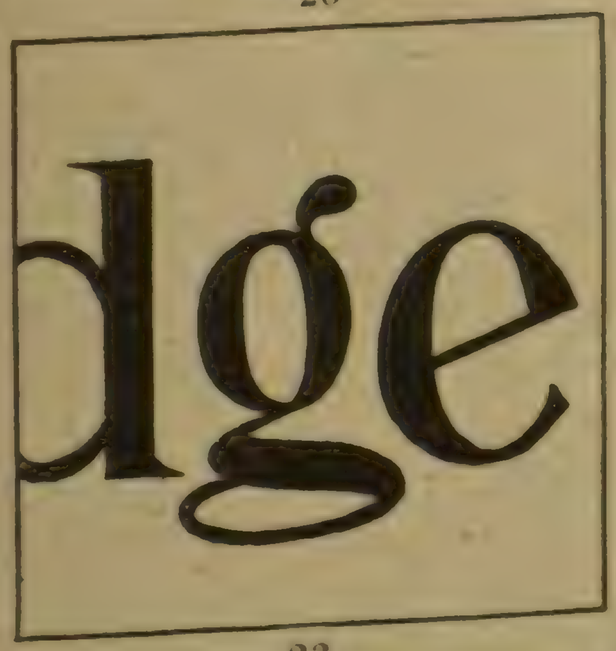

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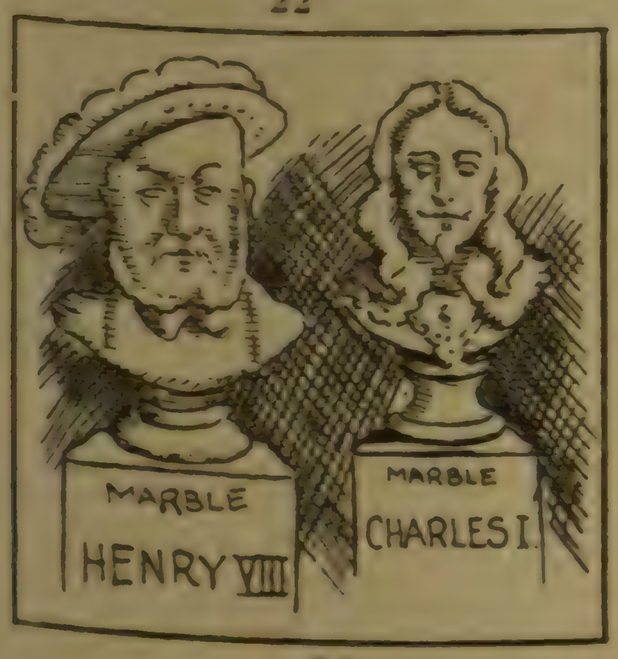

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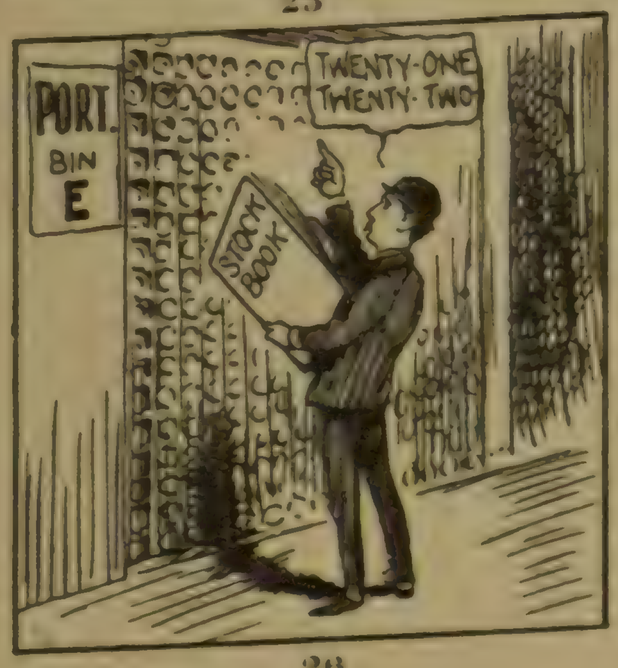

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"TWICE NIGHTLY"

By Richard Bird.

CHAPTER I

"OUT OF BOUNDS"

DIPCOTE assembled daily in the Big School at a quarter past eight for prayers. One of the monitors read the lesson from the platform, on which the Head sat in lonely splendour. The Head read prayers. Then came call-over, for which another monitor mounted the platform, following which the school filed out in order. This morning, after call-over had been duly observed, the Head rose in all the dignity of M.A. gown, rested one hand on the reading-desk and made a short announcement.

"It has come to my knowledge" he said, clearly and crisply, "that certain boys wearing the Dipcote cap have been seen at more than one performance at the Globe Theatre of Varieties. You know, or you ought to know, that all theatres and music-halls in the town are out of bounds. Any Dipcotian who visits the Globe or any other place of entertainment without leave during term-time will be severely punished."

That was all. The announcement did not flutter the school dovecots very much. Fellows did occasionally go to the Globe when feeling more than usually dare-devil; but it was not a common event, and the hero generally managed to allude to his adventure at least twice a day for a fortnight afterwards. The chief reasons for the rarity of the visits were two: first, it was risky; and secondly, it was only possible when a special holiday was given. A "special" meant a half-holiday, no prep., and an extension of lock-up. The latter was at seven-thirty in summer, and five-thirty in winter. On a "special," lock-up was at nine; and the Dipcotian who studied dramatic art, and was not afraid to run a distinct risk, could go to the Globe at the first performance (seven) and get back by nine, only missing the last twenty minutes of the show. But, as has been said, seeing that the risk was great and "specials" few, the "out-of-bounds" rule was pretty well observed.

"Wonder how the Old Man had it 'brought to his knowledge' that chaps go to the Globe?" said one Waite to an acquaintance, as they left Big School, and walked across to the Fifth Form room. "Don't suppose the old bird himself goes to the Globe for a breather, do you?"

"You never know," said the one addressed —Bateson—wagging a suspicious head. He's such a deep chap that you could almost believe he might be one of the trick cyclists or Chinese jugglers that are on this week. Hardly think it's likely, though."

"I suppose," pursued Waite, musing, "that some beastly day-bug's parent saw——"

"Here, I say!" interjected Bateson.

"What's the matter? Oh, sorry—forgot you were a beastly day-bug. Never mind; don't advertise it, and you'll find chaps will help you to live it down. Yes, I suppose some day-bug's people have sneaked. Pretty low trick."

"What do you think he meant when he said that 'any' Dipcotian would be punished? He's got no right to lay down a rule like that for day-boys."

"I wonder," said Waite, thoughtfully, as they reached the form-room. "I should think he has myself, but I don't know."

"Don't see why. A day-boy out of school is

supposed to be under the control of his people, not the school."

"M'yes—*supposed*," grunted Waite, getting his books out. "I expect the Old Man knows as well as we do what 'supposed' means. And I bet he meant to include day-bugs. Anyhow, why not ask him?"

"Because," said the truthful Bateson, "if I'm caught I shall say that I didn't know it applied to day-boys. Here's Lorimer."

The Fifth Form master entered the room, and in a few moments work was in full swing.

But at twelve o'clock, after school was over, Waite returned to the attack. He had meant to see Bateson in the interval, but Bateson had been in a hurry to pay a visit to the tuck-shop. At twelve, however, Waite walked part of the way home with his ally.

"Do you mean to say," he asked, "that you're going to the Globe on Friday?"

"That was our arrangement, wasn't it?" said Bateson, airily. "You're not going to back out now, are you?"

Waite considered the question. There was no doubt that Friday was to be a "special," for it had been announced two days ago. There was equally no doubt that he had promised to accompany Bateson to the Globe. But that was before the Head had issued his particular warning, and it looked a little unwise to fly in the face of authority so soon after the order.

"Hang it! You're not going to back out?" repeated the tempter.

"I don't know," said Waite, doubtfully; he loathed the idea of "backing out," but really, you know, this seemed almost a case when—"I don't know. I'm not a day-bug, you see; you're all right if you're copped."

"I don't *know* that," said Bateson; and to do him justice he did not feel at all sure that such a plea would save him. He hoped so—he thought so; but he was far from sure. "Dash it! I'm going to risk it. You know we always sit in the upper circle—there won't be any masters or parents *there*; they always go to the stalls or circle. You needn't funk it."

"Oh, all right," said Waite, weakening. "I'll come to the show, if you'll stand in with me if we're nabbed."

"Good man!" said Bateson.

CHAPTER II

DISCOVERED

THE two met upon Monk's Bridge on Friday night at half-past six. Waite had had tea half an hour earlier in the house, and had dutifully answered "Here!" when his name was called by the house-monitor. Then, with a feeling of joyful anticipation of the adventure, mixed with some natural qualms at the possibility of being "lagged," he made for the trysting-place, and was greeted warmly by Bateson.

The town, of course, was out of bounds, save at certain hours, and by special leave. But there were more ways than one of reaching the haven where they wished to be, and they were not so foolish as to choose the orthodox and legal road. Instead they plunged through devious ways and off the beaten track, now through a slum, now through a dark alley, rarely by a broad and well-known street. There was no telling whether masters might not be abroad. It was possible at all times, and even more likely now that an extra announcement had been made. It was even conceivable that certain masters had been told off for special detective duty for the occasion. This, as a matter of fact, was not the case. The Head was not the man to employ detective work unless the case was exceptional, and could be treated by no other means. But Waite and Bateson were taking no chances, and they were careful to choose the obscure paths. At last, with a sigh of relief, they stood outside the Globe. At the time they disapproved of the blaze of light that enveloped that classic structure, but there was no help for it. Electricity could not be turned off simply because a couple of malefactors were suffering from an unwonted attack of modesty.

Suddenly Waite felt Bateson grip his arm. "Quick, this way!" he whispered, fiercely; and Waite, his nerves jumping, obeyed the call. He and Bateson melted rapidly into the crowd. They shouldered their way through, Bateson leading, and in a few minutes they were in darkness in a street that ran behind the theatre. There they paused to collect themselves.

"What's up?" asked Waite, still ignorant of the reason for flight.

"Near shave!" said Bateson, gasping wth fright. "Didn't you see Maddox in front?"

Maddox was one of the junior masters, a new arrival at Dipcote.

"No," said Waite. "What was he doing?"

"Going in at the stalls entrance—booked seats only, you know. I never saw him till we were nearly on top of him. Jolly lucky he didn't spot us."

"Rather!" said Waite, appreciatively. "Good job you kept your eyes skinned, old hoss. Lucky we've not got stall tickets, eh?"

"Lucky we've not got tickets at all yet,"

returned Bateson, who still appeared to be suffering from fright.

"Why?"

"*Why?* You surely don't mean to go inside now that you know Maddox is there?"

But Waite did. He was more cautious than Bateson, but nevertheless not timid as he. When Bateson had urged him to go he had been unwilling, for he knew the risk, and he had no particular wish for a flogging. He had yielded weakly in the end, simply because he hated Bateson to think him a funk. But now that he had crossed the Rubicon, now that he had escaped the worst perils of the journey unharmed, he had no wish to go back to Dipcote without something to show for his trouble. Besides, he was calmer than Bateson, and could see the comparative absence of danger.

"Yes, I am," he said, slowly. "I don't think there's much to funk, if we only take a little care. Maddox hasn't seen us yet, and there's no reason why he should. Anyhow, we'll take extra precautions; we won't go into the upper circle—we'll go to the gallery instead."

"Among all the louts?" said Bateson, in disgust.

"Yes; we'll sit at the back away from them, so we needn't catch anything, if that's what you're thinking of. Ought to be rather fun—I've never been in the gallery. No chance of Maddox, or anyone else, being up there, and he can't see us from the stalls."

"But afterwards?" objected Bateson, who did not like the idea at all.

"You ass! We'll go out by the gallery exit, he'll go out by the stalls exit. Where is the danger?"

Bateson still was not anxious to agree, but shame prevented him from a blank refusal. He gave way with an ill grace.

"All right," he said, sulkily; "I suppose we may as well. Wonder what he thinks he's doing here. If *we're* forbidden I don't see why masters should go."

"Perhaps the Old Man's sent him here as a 'tec,'" suggested Waite; but though the plausible suggestion was accepted by Bateson, it was wide of the mark.

The hopeful pair made their way round to the gallery entrance, keeping a sharp look-out for other spoilers of their peace. They were agreeably disappointed, for none other of the Dipcote staff was on view, and they reached the entrance unobserved. Here they paid and went upstairs. On arriving in the gallery they found it pretty full, but there were half a dozen rows at the back unoccupied, and on one of these they sat down, away from possible unwashed and unsavoury.

The performance was of the usual type in a provincial music-hall—mostly dull to the matured eye. But to two boys who were anything but *blasé*, and who naturally regarded the whole affair as a stupendous adventure, it was exciting and amusing. They applauded the acrobats, the dancers, the singers—every turn, in fact; even the most heart-rending attempts at "humour" were sure of a laugh from them.

From their elevated position among the "gods" they could not observe the foe known to be lurking in the stalls. This did not cause them any uneasiness, for they had no special wish to feast their eyes upon Mr. Maddox; so long as they felt themselves safe from his eye they were quite happy in watching the entertainment, and eating half a pound of caramels. Bateson had brightened up considerably after a quarter of an hour's immunity had convinced him that nothing was to be feared; and when the "star" of the evening appeared later he was quite his old self.

There followed what is known as a "sketch," or in other words a tabloid play. The sketch in question was an unusually good little play—exciting and plausible, a play that "gripped," as the publicity agent announced upon the hoardings. It lasted some twenty minutes, and the two boys sat spellbound, for the time being completely carried away by the story and the acting. Even the acting was good. But they were destined to enjoy only ten minutes of pleasure, for at the end of that brief period of happiness Waite dug Bateson violently in the ribs, and whispered in agony, "*Look!*"

Bateson jumped, roused thus cruelly from illusion. He followed Waite's horrified gaze, and, as he followed it, his jaw dropped. For there, large as life, on the other side of the gallery stood Maddox.

The shock was icy, and for the moment Bateson gasped for breath. He could not speak. Waite, equally disgusted, but still capable of action, whispered "Slide!"

Bateson's last agonised glance before he left the gallery gave him some little comfort. Maddox was not looking at them. He was watching either the stage or an elderly man and his wife in the front row; Bateson could not be sure which. There was still a chance that he had not seen them—a slim chance, but yet a chance. So they left their resting-place as unostentatiously as possible, and quitted the theatre with a resolute haste. Waite struck off for the school, and Bateson accompanied him

for a part of the way. Both felt very lonely, and "up against it."

"Think he spotted us?" quavered Bateson, as soon as they were clear of the hall. "Have we a look-in yet, do you think?"

"Dunno," said Waite, grimly. "One 'ud say that he was *bound* to notice us there, sitting all alone like asses. Still, you never can tell. Our luck *may* be in, after all. You see, he never came up and collared us, as you would have expected him to. It's just possible he didn't see us. He may have come up only that minute, though I can't say it seems very likely."

"What on earth did he come up for?" groaned the craven Bateson. "Why on earth didn't he stick downstairs in his stall?"

"Looks as if he came up to play the 'tec.';

Bateson followed Waite's horrified gaze, and his jaw fell. For on the other side of the gallery stood the master they wished to avoid.

but if he did, you'd have thought he would have come up to us at once. Hanged if I can make it out!"

"What shall we do if he sneaks?"

"What *can* we do, you ass? We're fairly lagged, if we are lagged."

"That means a hiding from the Old Man."

"Yes," said Waite, shortly, and there was a depressed silence. The Old Man's hidings did not err on the side of mercy.

Presently Bateson, trudging dolefully by the side of his victim, said, "I say!"

"Yes?"

"If we are lagged, and the Head wants to lam us, I—I think I shall say that I didn't know day-boys were forbidden."

"What?" said Waite, stopping short.

Bateson repeated his proposition, a little more courageously.

"You'll let me take a lamming, and try to get yourself out of it?" said Waite, in amazed disgust. "After what you said about standing in with me?"

"Well," agreed Bateson, "I don't see that it would do you any good if I were lammed too. If I can get off why shouldn't I?"

"Do you call that sporting?" asked Waite, walking on rather quickly.

"I don't see why not," said Bateson, sullenly. "It wouldn't do you any good."

Waite trudged on in silence, reviewing the situation. He knew that Bateson's logic was right—Bateson's sufferings would not mitigate his physical pains. But he knew that that was not the question—it was a moral issue, the question of the sporting thing. And Bateson had promised to stand in. He knew that he would never have thought of such a thing himself. "Dash it!" he thought, bitterly. "What a rotter the chap is! If I'd known he was this sort of brute I'd never have come." That night had at least one good result—it made a breach between the two that never was healed.

"You—you don't mind?" said Bateson, presently, to break the appalling silence. "If I could do you any good, old chap, I'd take it gladly. But as I can't—and, perhaps besides, he mayn't have spotted us after all."

Waite stopped again.

"Look here," he said, grimly, "don't yo

call me 'o'l chap' again. I think you're a beastly unsporting cad. You can do what you like; but you needn't trouble to pal up with me again after this."

"Oh, I say——" began Bateson.

"Shut up! You know what I think, and you can do what you like."

Then Bateson dropped even further.

"You won't give me away?" he said.

"You rotter!" said Waite. "Do you think I'm your sort? No, I won't give you away, you miserable funk! Now, clear off."

Bateson slunk away into the night. Waite walked on, and got into the house well in time for lock-up.

CHAPTER III

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE HEAD

THE explanation of the unlucky appearance of Maddox was simple, though unusual. He happened to dabble a little in writing, in the intervals between strenuous teaching and strenuous play. He wrote stories for the monthly magazines, and occasional light verse, or articles, as well. But he aspired even higher than this. A full-bodied novel was half-completed, and he had already sketched the scenario of a play. More, he had actually written and got accepted a one-act play. He had tried to get it taken by the manager of a "legitimate" theatre, but this had hung fire. Finally, a friend's friend knew a man who knew an actor who wanted a sketch. Maddox's one-act play returned at an opportune moment. It was accepted, with modifications, as a sketch for the halls, and in due course went on tour.

Maddox (who naturally wrote over a *nom de plume*) had never seen his dramatic masterpiece on the stage. Consequently when it visited Dipcote he was anxious to see what it looked like from the front. He was also anxious to see how the spectators liked it. So, not content with watching the demeanour of the "stalls," he visited the circle, and at last the gallery. An author knows his play by heart, but he does not know his audiences; and though Maddox would dearly have liked to watch his play, he found it more interesting to watch his master—the public. Hence his appearance among the "gods."

And though he was deeply interested in all he saw, he found time to be interested in a couple of Dipcote caps. He looked again, and recognised their wearers. He sighed inwardly, for he did not love (no decent master does) the disagreeable duty of reporting offenders. Still, it had to be done, and done it was next morning. The Head's lips tightened ominously when Maddox made his report. One must admit there was justification.

Waite and Bateson were sent for during the last hour of morning school. They knew, of course, at once what the message meant, and they went across rather desperately, Bateson trying to make conversation, and Waite refusing to be drawn. They knocked gently at the Head's study door, and in answer to his stern "Come in!" entered the room. The Head was standing on the hearthrug, with his back to the fire. Being a man of few words but decisive action he plunged into the heart of the subject without delay.

"Mr. Maddox tells me," he began, "that you two boys were at the Globe Theatre last night. There is no mistake, I suppose?"

Both boys said, "No, sir." There was nothing else to say.

"A serious offence at any time," continued the Head, "but doubly so after my express prohibition. Have you anything to say?"

He looked at Waite, who was feeling more than ill at ease. However, he answered steadily enough, "No, sir."

"No excuse."

Waite cast about in his mind for something plausible and extenuating. He could think of nothing, so he merely said, "No, sir," again.

The Head turned to Bateson.

"And you, Bateson?"

"Please, sir," said Bateson, rather feebly, "I didn't know the rule applied to day-boys."

This was not exactly a lie, according to a certain code; Bateson did not *know* that the rule applied. It was as near a lie as might be; still, it did not quite cross the border line. Waite grudgingly told himself this as he listened. The Head looked grimmer.

"Anything else?"

"Please, sir, my father does not object to my going to the Globe."

This was true. Mr. Bateson had taken his son there before this, being ignorant of the school rule.

The Head looked grimmer still.

"You ought to know, Bateson, that all school rules during term time apply to day-boys as well as boarders. In the holidays you can do as your parents please. But I will not punish you without full inquiry. If you bring me a note from your father accepting full responsibility, assuring me that he gave you leave to

go to the Globe last night, I will not punish you this time. For the present you can go."

Bateson went.

"*Now*, Waite," said the Head, very firmly.

We need not dwell on the scene. Waite, a decent enough chap, had broken a rule with his eyes open. More, he was one of the bigger boys. It was, from a school point of view, a bad case. He deserved all he got, and he knew it. But we can place to his credit that he took his licking (and it was an extremely hot licking) like a man and a sportsman.

After it was over the Head said, very gravely:—

"Waite, I'm not going to rub this in. But I warn you that if anything similar occurs again you'll be expelled. Now go."

Waite would have liked to have been able to say "Yes, Sir," but it was all he could do to restrain a weakling's tears. So he said nothing, and got outside the study as quickly as he could.

"Phew!" he thought, as he made his painful way across to the house; "that was sappy. By *George*, it was sappy! I didn't know the Old Man could hit so hard. 'Expelled,' he said, my son, *expelled* next time. Waite, old buck, this will have to be your last flutter. Whew!"

(And, in parenthesis, though it is nothing to do with the story, we may say that it *was* his last flutter. Also, he and the Head became exceedingly pally by the time he was made a school monitor. But this is going too far ahead.)

Let us return to a less pleasant theme, to wit, Bateson. That miserable youth escaped from the Old Man's den amid a conflict of mixed emotions. He was unfeignedly glad that he had escaped; but he was wretchedly aware that his safety was but temporary. If he could not produce on the morrow a note from his father he would suffer at least double the punishment he would have received. And he had time to look forward to it.

Bateson pleaded a headache that afternoon, and was allowed to stay at home. The headache was real, though trivial. He spent an hour or two thinking the matter over.

He came to the dismal conclusion that he could not ask his father for the note. It was true that Mr. Bateson did not object to the Globe, but he was exceedingly keen on the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He would most certainly object to his son allowing the Head to be under the impression that he had given him special leave last night. No; Bateson decided that he could not approach his father on the subject.

What then? If the note were not produced—Bateson's mind recoiled in pure fright from the logical consequence. *It* must not happen! It

"Mr. Maddox tells me," said the Head, "that you boys were at the Globe Theatre last night."

should not happen! He, Bateson, could not face it.

It followed that the note must be produced.

It followed that Bateson must be responsible for the production.

It followed that Bateson fell still further, and resolved to try a little amateur forging. He began to think it was almost a pity he had been such a funk. If he had not been so overpowered at least the lamming would have been over now. But the Head! And that cane! The wretched Bateson shivered.

He was by no means a fool, though he was such a rotter. He knew well enough that he could not hope to imitate his father's handwriting for half a dozen lines, but he thought he might manage the signature. Yes, that might be done.

Instant action was necessary. Bateson's headache ceased to be oppressive. He heard a door shut below, and looked out of the window. He saw his mother going out, obviously to pay a call.

Bateson went boldly down stairs, knowing that his father was at the office. He went into the study, and opened his father's typewriter. With an uneasy glance round Bateson fixed a sheet of notepaper in the carrier, and began to strike the keys.

"Come in!" said the Head, next morning after prayers. "Ah! that you, Bateson? Have you brought a note?"

"Yes, sir."

"Leave it on the table. I'll look at it presently."

"Yes, sir," said Bateson, and escaped as quickly as possible.

The Head picked up the letter, and tore the envelope. He read the following words:—

DEAR SIR,—I hear from my son that you wish to know if I approve of his having gone to the Globe last night. I understand now that the school rules do not allow even day-boys to go to the theatres during term time without special permission, and in future I shall support your authority. But as my son was ignorant of the meaning of the rule, I hope that you will not think it necessary to punish him. Under the circumstances he had my approval.

Yours very truly,
WM. BATESON.

The Head crinkled this ingenious effort in his fingers, frowning thoughtfully. Then he read it once again, and yet a third time. It looked all right, and read straightforward, but ——but——

The Head did not feel quite satisfied. The recollection of Bateson's craven appearance did not make him think charitably of the offender. His demeanour had not been that of an innocent culprit, sinning in ignorance. He did not feel at all satisfied that Bateson was spotless. But there was this note from his father.

The Head looked at it again, and, being no tenderfoot, conceived the idea that it might be forged. It was typewritten—it *might* be—it probably was. Bateson's terrified face again rose before his eyes, and the suspicions became a practical certainty. The Head shook himself with an instinctive feeling of disgust; it was a dirty trick, if——

If it were forged! He could not be absolutely certain unless he asked Mr. Bateson. This he was not anxious to do if it could possibly be helped. The Head was a clean-minded sportsman, and he had striven for fifteen years to implant (among other things) a tradition of truth. He liked to be able to take a boy's word without question. It had been an up-hill battle, but he had met with a good deal of success at last. Dipcotians, whatever attitude they assumed towards other masters, now felt that they owed truth to the Old Man, because—he accepted their word. And now here was a case where the Old Man felt morally certain that Bateson was shuffling. Still, he *might* be telling the truth. And if he were, an appeal to Mr. Bateson would destroy all future confidence between him and the son.

The Head thought things over. Then he had an idea, and smiled grimly. He sat down at his desk, and wrote the following note:—

DEAR MR. BATESON,—Thank you for your note. I quite understand the position, and appreciate your promise of support.—Yours very truly,
R. N. WILKINSON.

He addressed it to Mr. Bateson's office and sent it by express.

Bateson was "wanted in the head master's study" last hour in the afternoon. He went with faltering footsteps. Outside the door he paused before knocking. He heard—oh, horrors!—his father's voice.

"Then I will leave him to you, Mr. Wilkinson," said the voice, sternly. "Good afternoon."

The door opened suddenly, and Mr. Bateson stepped out. Master Bateson stepped in.

THE END.

SOUTHAMPTON STREET,
STRAND, LONDON.

"The British Empire requires at the present time hard service from all its sons. It requires the hardest service from those to whom most has been given." So spoke His Majesty the King to the boys of Eton in June last, and it was a message that was addressed, not only to the ears, but to the hearts of every public schoolboy in the land. This significant reminder of the debt every British boy owes to his country, a debt he can only repay by making and keeping himself thoroughly fit, mentally and physically, ought to be constantly emphasised by those who are in charge of our great schools. The perfect system of our public schools is accepted by far too many a boy as a luxury devised for his personal satisfaction, and he takes the advantages offered him with scarcely a thought that in after years he will be called upon, by the deeds of his own life, to justify the training he has received.

One of our greatest modern writers has said that the purpose of the public school is "to take the boy of the more or less responsible class, to correct his harsh egotisms, broaden his outlook, give him a grasp of the contemporary developments he will be presently called upon to influence and control, and send him on to the University to be made a leading and ruling social man." Now if a boy is to be made fit to govern it is of paramount importance that he be clearly instructed in the social questions of the day, or else, when his time comes to *direct* those problems he will not have that thorough sympathy which is born only out of complete understanding of such matters, and he must fail, either entirely or in part, in negotiating with them.

Sir Robert Baden-Powell inspecting a "Manual Labour" Squad of Clayesmore School boys. The head master (Mr. Alex. Devine) is seen on the left of Sir Robert.
Photo, Topical.

The Boy Scout movement has done, undoubtedly, a great deal towards showing a boy the right way to exercise power, and how to utilise control to the best advantage. The art of leadership is a great thing, and it cannot be impressed too early upon a boy how very

difficult an art it is. Its success rests upon one condition above all others, and that is an absolute personal working knowledge of one's subordinates. One must understand, in minute detail, *their* point of view. The boy scout movement brings together all classes of fellows, and teaches a mutual respect which is bound in after years to have the very finest patriotic results, since it must inevitably tend to the elimination of class prejudice, the greatest barricade to a nation's progress. The head master of Clayesmore School, who has written to me on this subject, is not only an enthusiastic supporter of the scouts, but he has gone further in the matter of economic instruction, for he says that, "At Clayesmore we hold the view that a gentleman should not despise manual labour, should be able to *do* what he may, in later life, have to command, and that he should sympathise with the physical worker. Therefore manual work has always been part of our programme. There are hidden virtues and values in such work." The boys of Clayesmore levelled and made out of rough ground their own cricket field, and have also done much path-making and forestry work in the woods. Earl Brassey had recently much to say in recommendation of this interesting experiment, as also did Sir Robert Baden-Powell, who, in the photograph on the previous page, is seen inspecting a squad of Clayesmore boys in their manual work kit. It will be seen that they are wearing Lancashire clogs, considered to be the best footwear for outdoor labour. Seldom has an innovation of such practical use been introduced into the curriculum of a school, nor one which has met with so whole-hearted a support.

Christmas will be upon us when this magazine it in your hands, and I want just once again, but as heartily as ever, to wish you a Merry Yuletide, and, what to my mind, is still more important, a Happy New Year. Christmases come and are quickly gone, but a year takes longer in the passing, and is more full of mystery and change, so I always take more particular interest in the New Year greetings. May every Captainite find 1912 to his liking, and enjoy its 366 days to the full. (Three sixty *six* days, Mr. Printer, not three sixty *five*. Yes, those who were born on February 29th are going to have a birthday at last!) In Leap Year may we all leap ahead in prosperity—and in confidence let me tell you I fancy we, so far as THE CAPTAIN is concerned, assuredly will. For I have obtained from favourite CAPTAIN authors—the manuscripts are already on my desk—some of the best stories they have ever written. All of you will welcome back Captain Charles Gilson, of "Lost Empire" fame, to these pages. His story, "The Scarlet Hand," will appear in our next number. S. H. Shoveller, the greatest hockey forward the game has yet produced (or ever will, the experts say) has written a special article entitled, "Hints on Hockey," for the February CAPTAIN. A fine school story by Captain Hope, "Bullock's Master Stroke," will also appear; and an interesting article, "Dickens the Boy," by A. B. Cooper. I have, too, for early publication another delightful tale by Harold Avery, whose "Burying the Hatchet" in this number you will all like. Then—but more of this anon—I have secured two serials for our next volume which not a Captainite among our many thousands will fail to enjoy. So, "A Happy New Year to you all," and I shall do my best to make the wish come true by providing you with reading matter which will make your spare hours, at any rate, happier than they have ever been.

A Merrie Christmas to ALL "Captain" Readers

What do I think of the M.C.C. team in Australia? a correspondent asks me. I can answer that question in a word—

"Tip-top!" They are a well-balanced team, all of a fighting stock, with old wisdom and young enthusiasm combined. They are led by the ideal skipper, Plum Warner, prince of batsmen, best of gentlemen, respected by every man who has held a bat or bowled a ball. Those older Captainites who remember his articles when he was Athletic Editor of this magazine—we have a personal besides a national interest in the fortunes of his team—need not my eulogy of the soundness of his judgment. He knows cricket, the exigencies of cricket, and the way to encompass them, through and through. Shortly before he sailed he was in these offices, modest as ever, but quietly confident. "Well, Mr. Warner," I asked, jokingly, "are you taking an urn to bring the ashes back in?" "No," he replied, with a smile, "but I am taking a fine lot to earn them with!" As I write Mr. Warner is lying ill in a nursing home at Sydney, but I hope and trust he will be fit and well for the first Test Match. If he cannot play it will be an irreparable loss, and latest advices say, too, that George Gunn will in all probability be an absentee. But bad luck or good, we can look forward to the team putting up a sturdy and plucky fight, and if victory be theirs or not, they will make a bold bid for it. Good luck to them and their splendid captain—and so, I know, say all of you!

Why is Cricket the Finest Game in the World?—Here is a good theme for composition, and here is a hint of the manner in which Mr. Warner might treat it: "Is there any other game in which a number of men would be content to spend hours of inaction, and yet at the end of the day confess to a sense of satisfaction? The intense pleasure which a man's own success in cricket inspires in him is no doubt largely due to the amount of waiting which has to go to securing it. A long innings, an afternoon's wicket-keeping, or even a long spell of bowling, makes demands upon the character and endurance of a man such as are not exceeded in any other game. Every individual stroke is effected with more hazard than in any other game. A man who plays a dashing game against good bowling must possess just that temperament, compounded of daring and confidence, which has been thought to be typically British. Again, every move in the game of cricket is irrevocable. The remorse for the dropped catch which was irretrievable, because it was the only ball that came to a man during the afternoon, has almost an element of tragedy about it. Most other games bring an almost certain opportunity of repairing a mistake. Cricket alone avenges herself upon her children, and, in the very spirit of the Fates, she gives no second chance to the man who is unworthy of her favours."

P. F. Warner

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

STAMPS

Q.X.Z.—There are no stamp handbooks with coloured illustrations of postage stamps. The Government will not permit it. For a chatty and instructive volume try "Stamp Collecting as a Pastime," by the late E. J. Nankivell, published by Messrs. Stanley Gibbons, Limited, price one shilling.

A.T.W.A.—Yes, Europe is, of course, a fascinating continent philatelically, but it embraces many great varieties. (2) Albums are not usually issued for separate continents, but you could build up your own album for Europe only by buying the countries separately on Messrs. Stanley Gibbons' "Sectional Imperial" System. (3) Any established dealer will supply special packets of European stamps.

Leroy.—You can readily identify the stamps by means of a catalogue. Those mentioned in your list are worth (1) 2*s.* 6*d.*; (2) 3*d.*; (3) 9*d.*; (4) 1*s.*, if in fair average condition.

GENERAL

C. H. Christmas.—Candidates for the position of assistant of Excise are examined in the following subjects: Handwriting, arithmetic, English composition and spelling, general geography, and any two of the following three—English history (from A.D. 1485), mathematics, and elementary chemistry,

The examination fee is £1, and candidates must be between nineteen and twenty-two years of age. Since the amalgamation of the Customs and the Excise branches of the Civil Service, it has been temporarily rather difficult to speak with precision as to salary, but it may be taken as certain that an Excise assistant will receive a commencing salary which, with allowances, will approximate to £80 or £85 per annum, with every prospect of attaining the maximum pay of a first-class officer —£250 per annum, excluding allowances. There are also a limited number of higher posts. The latest details can be obtained by sending a large stamped and addressed envelope to the Civil Service Commissioners, Burlington House, W.C.

"Thonmasm."—I am not aware that "throwing the voice" has a deleterious effect on the system, unless you practise it in the presence of people who may throw other things in return. As for your suggestion that ventriloquists live only half as long as they might, a famous living exponent of the art, Lieutenant Walter Cole, was appearing before the public many years before the majority of Captainites were born. If anything suffers at all (apart from your audience) it ought to be your throat. Messrs. L. Upcott Gill publish a book on ventriloquism at a shilling.

J. L. Donnelly.—The first requisite for those who aspire to the Indian Police is sound health, as the medical examination which has to be passed is very strict. Candidates must be over nineteen and under twenty-one years old on June 1st, and you should apply to the Civil Service Commissioners or the India Office for details of the subjects of examination and other information, which needs studying with great care. When the examination has been passed, a test in horsemanship has to be undergone, and soon after this the successful candidate voyages to India, receiving as a probationer a commencing salary equivalent to about £240 per annum. You ought to lose no time in beginning your preparation; but there is no reason why you should not obtain a temporary appointment of some kind, though you would probably not find it easy to secure such an appointment in a good bank.

C. U. A. Co.—Many thanks for good wishes. We cannot answer personal queries about competitions; it would not be fair to the other competitors. Judge for yourself from the rules.

"Worried."—You should see a doctor about indigestion. Exercise in moderation should not harm you, in spite of your weak heart, but consult your doctor about this, too.

Acknowledgments and Thanks are also due to D. E. Pithie, W. H. Avery, H. B. Reynolds, "Marco Polo," H. de M., and others.

"THE CAPTAIN" COT

I HAVE already had a good number of responses to my appeal to my readers in the Christmas CAPTAIN asking them to support a CAPTAIN Cot at Lord Mayor Treloar's Home for Crippled Children at Alton. But if this cot is to be established permanently I shall want to receive a great many more assurances from Captainites that they will generously support it, and I hope that before this year has quite passed out a large number of further promises will reach me. All I ask you to do is to send me a post-card *at once*, saying that you will help us in this splendid work.

Football in Jumboland. "A Goal!"

A PAGE FULL OF FUN

THE English language contains somewhere about forty thousand words. Yet when a man wishes to stop a cab or a 'bus he can think of nothing better to say than "Hi!"

***

Quite Obvious.

SQUIRE (to yokel): "Well, John, did you give Mr. Mannersleigh my note?"

Yokel: "Yes, sir; but it's no use writing letters to him. He can't see to read them. He's blind—blind as a bat."

Squire: "Blind?"

Yokel: "Yes, sir, blind. Twice he asked me where my hat was, and I had it on my head all the time."

Getting Out.

"Do you find my son prompt and punctual, Mr. Grindley?"

"I never had a young man in my employ who, at the close of business hours, could get out of the office with less delay."

***

A Chiel Among Them!

THE journalist who was caught in the act of robbing a bank has been released on the plea that he was "only taking notes."

***

Hard Lines!

A CERTAIN railway line in the north of Britain some years ago had the reputation of being very badly laid. A commercial traveller relates an incident in his experience while travelling on the line in question. They were rushing along, he declared, at the rate of seven miles an hour, and the train was rocking atrociously. Passengers were rolling from one side of the carriage to the other, or holding on like grim death to the window-strap. Presently the motion became a little steadier. At least, one could keep his hat on and his teeth from chattering. The traveller smiled faintly at the quiet-looking man opposite him, and remarked: "We seem to be going smoother."

"Yes," said the quiet man, "we're off the rails now!"

***

MR. GROWLER: "Now, I s'pose you want me to look pleasant?"

Photographer (politely): "Unless you prefer to look natural."

THINGS ONE HAS TO LIVE DOWN.

UNCLE SILAS (to Jack, who has cleaned his bicycle for him): "Ah, thanks, Jack, my boy. Here's half a crown——"

JACK: "Oh, thank you, uncle; it's awfully decent of you!"

UNCLE SILAS: "Just run round and buy a tin of bicycle oil, and you may keep a penny of the change."

In front of the great image sat the High Priest, and near him stood Guy's friend and tutor, guarded by two gigantic Mongols, each stripped to the waist and armed with huge double-handed swords. Fearlessly Guy took his place by the side of his friend.

The SCARLET HAND

A Thrilling Tale of Adventure in China

By CAPTAIN CHARLES GILSON

CHAPTER 1

THE CAVE

"BUT, father, you promised——"

Mr. Dashwood stretched forth a hand. He was seated at his desk in his office, and his son Guy had paid him a somewhat unusual visit in the morning.

"Guy, it was some months ago when I promised to allow you to go on this duck-shooting expedition. There have been disturbances since then. The whole country is in a most unsettled state."

"But, father, I shall have Mr. Mercer with me, and Ah Tsun. Besides, I have made all arrangements; I have hired a sampan out of my own money for a dollar a day."

In China a sampan is a two-masted river boat. Guy Dashwood had been looking forward to this expedition for the greater part of the year. His father had but recently given him his first shot-gun—a 4-bore hammerless ejector. Mr. Mercer, his tutor, an old Oxford blue, was a keen sportsman. And tutor and pupil had arranged to have a week's shooting among the duck that frequented the upper reaches of the Woosung River.

It was some time before Mr. Dashwood was able to make up his mind. Then, with a shrug of the shoulders, he again picked up his pen.

"Very well, my boy, you can go. I suppose it will be all right. At any rate, I have infinite trust in Mercer. He understands the Chinese, and knows the language. Besides, Ah Tsun is not exactly a fool."

Early the following morning, Guy, Mr. Mercer, and Ah Tsun, the Dashwoods' Chinese cook, set sail up stream from the great European treaty port of Shanghai. It was the time of year when the rains had fallen on the hills. The river was flooded; the stream came down at a mad, headlong rate, and for many miles they were obliged to hire coolies to tow their sampan against the stream. Though they themselves progressed at a snail's pace Guy was interested, and even excited, to observe the Chinese river boats, borne down stream at a most tempestuous pace without the aid of either oars or sails. The skill with which the junkmen guided their craft clear of the rocks and shoals was wonderful to behold.

Two nights in succession the little shooting party camped on the banks of the river. Ah Tsun, with all the skill of a Chinese cook, provided them with their meals; and in the evening Mr. Mercer, seated cross-legged at the camp fire with his pipe between his teeth, would recount for the twentieth time at Guy's request how Oxford won the cricket match in the year he got his Blue.

Late in the afternoon of the third day they arrived at a place where the river narrowed and the scenery grew more wild. Villages were scarce; the country was barren and seemed deserted; and there before them were the hills. In the hope of getting a shot at some sand-grouse, Guy and Mr. Mercer took their guns and ascended the higher ground, leaving Ah Tsun behind to cook their dinner.

Finding no grouse upon the lower slopes, they resolved to follow a path which appeared to lead across the mountains. It still wanted three hours to sunset; and after two days in a cramped position, in a small and uncomfortable boat, they were glad enough of a walk.

Presently the path carried them along the brink of a precipice. The aspect of the country was barbarous and savage. Vegetation was scanty; nowhere did there seem to be any sign of life. On this account their surprise may be imagined when they saw rising from behind a prominent and jagged rock a vertical column of smoke. On drawing nearer they discovered that this smoke came from the entrance of a

cave, perched like a raven's nest upon the very skirting of the cliff.

They did not hesitate to enter. The fire, they found, had been but newly kindled. It was a wood fire, and some of the logs had not yet caught. The flames that came from the others served to illumine the walls of the cave. It was with a feeling of dismay that they saw that these walls were hung around with several knives and murderous-looking swords.

Mr. Mercer, more cautious on Guy's account than his own, was for beating a hasty retreat; but, by then, Guy, his curiosity fully aroused, had advanced to the innermost extremity of the cave. There his eye was arrested by a large sheet of paper, which had been affixed to the rock as a bill smothers a hoarding. Guy called his tutor to his side, and Mr. Mercer examined the paper by the light of a brand he had taken from the fire, and now used as a torch.

It proved to be a proclamation of one of the most dreaded societies of Boxers. The large Chinese characters were painted in scarlet ink; and the proclamation declared in flowery language that on a certain date—not far distant—there would be an organised and unprecedented revolt against all the Europeans in Shanghai. It went on to say that no mercy would be shown, that all "foreign devils," man, woman, and child, would be ruthlessly put to the sword, and their bodies cast into the Yangtse. The proclamation bore the signatures of certain prominent members of the Boxer Society, and at the bottom was the seal of the Secret Society of the Scarlet Hand—the most dread, formidable, and dangerous secret society in Asia. When Mr. Mercer had finished his translation of the placard they both paled, and looked at each other in alarm. As Guy's father had said, there had been talk of this rising for months, and now the blow was about to fall.

"Come, Guy," exclaimed the tutor, "we must get out of this, if our lives are worth a cent."

The boy turned towards the entrance of the cave; and as he did so it was as if his blood was suddenly frozen in every vein. For the daylight was shut from the mouth of the cave by a line of the greatest cut-throats that Guy had ever seen in his life. Their pigtails were knotted on their heads; their faces were unshaven and blue; they were without foreheads; their cheek-bones were high, and their yellow teeth like fangs. Yet this was not the worst of it, for around the waist of each was the red sash of the Secret Society of the Scarlet Hand.

As one man the Boxers gave a shout that filled the cave, and rushed forward to seize their weapons from the walls. Two of the foremost went down before the twin barrels of Guy Dashwood's shot-gun, and lay writhing in agony at the feet of the boy.

Mr. Mercer made a movement forward, as if to draw his pupil back, when a huge Chinese, who had armed himself with one of the long knives from the wall, struck at the Englishman's heart. Mercer caught the man's wrist in the nick of time. The struggle that ensued was brief; the knife was wrenched from the Boxer's grasp, and he was hurled backwards into his comrades.

As quick as thought, before the Chinese had time to recover from their surprise, Guy and Mr. Mercer snatched the weapons from the walls of the cave, and threw them in a heap upon the floor. Before this heap they stationed themselves, resolved to fight to the end. Their chances of escape were small; many of the Boxers had managed to secure those arms which were nearest to the mouth of the cave, and these barred the way. As for the others, with execrations for the Englishmen and vows of vengeance, they urged their comrades on.

Though numbers were heavily against them, the advantage, in one respect, at least, lay with the Englishmen. With their shot-guns they could strike at a distance, whilst the Chinese, armed only with steel weapons, were powerless unless their adversaries came within reach of their swords.

The first rush of the Boxers was repulsed by a volley—if we may call it such when there were only two to fire. The spreading duck-shot inflicted some fearful wounds; and the Chinese turned back and fled in panic from the cave.

"Now's our chance!" cried Guy. And followed by Mercer he rushed forward to the entrance.

They were met by the flashing blades of the Chinese swords, that caught the light of the fast declining sun. They were no nearer safety than before. On either side of the cave the Boxers held the narrow path that fringed the deep ravine. Side by side they retired into their recess, resolved to fight like the cave-tigers of Amoy.

"Shall we charge them?" asked Guy. "Do you think we would have a chance?"

The tutor shook his head.

"It would be certain death," said he;

"better stay here, and let them come on. We have plenty of ammunition, and we will account for a few before we go."

It was some time before the Boxers summoned up sufficient courage for a second onslaught. This time they came forward with a rush. Both the Europeans fired; and then, clubbing their guns, they moved forward to meet the advancing horde.

Mercer was in the act of bringing the leader to the ground when a second Boxer sprang at his throat like a cat. In a moment the Englishman and the Chinese were locked in each other's arms, and so close and fast was the tutor's grip that the Boxer had not space to use his knife. Before Mercer had shaken this man off another was at his back, and about to drive home his sword. Guy, seeing his tutor's distress, raised his shot-gun, and brought the butt down with all his force upon the shaven head of the would-be murderer. The man's skull cracked like a hazel-nut, and he sank to the ground in a heap. Guy was about to utter a cry of triumph, when suddenly his arms were pinioned to his sides.

He could not move. He was held as in a vice.

Their chances of escape were small. Armed with their terrible weapons, the Boxers barred their way to the mouth of the cave. Guy and his tutor resolved to fight to the last.

And thus he stood by and watched his gallant friend, fighting bravely to the last, overpowered by sheer weight of numbers.

CHAPTER II

THE MONASTERY

GUY DASHWOOD and his tutor, Mr. Mercer, who three days previously had set off so happily and innocently from Shanghai, now lay bound hand and foot upon the floor of the Boxers' cave. Several of the Chinese were badly wounded, and three were dead. These latter were laid at the mouth of the cave, while the remainder seated themselves in a circle around their prisoners, upon whom they gloated with almost fiendish joy.

Then was held a conference. The Chinese made no secret of their plans, but spoke in loud voices, so that both Guy and Mr. Mercer could hear and understand their grim intentions.

It was at first suggested that they should put their prisoners instantly to death. This was rejected by a man taller, and even more evil-looking, than the rest, who appeared to be the leader of the band. He said that instant death was too lenient a punishment for two "foreign devils" who had killed three of their number. This man proposed that the prisoners should be taken to a certain Lama monastery that lay some two miles distant in the heart of the mountains, and where the priest resided who was the official head of the Secret Society of the Scarlet Hand. This proposal was unanimously agreed upon. Immediately the whole party rose to their feet.

Guy, with the quick-moving thoughts of one in danger, reviewed the circumstances in which he found himself. His position was not an enviable one. Once he was conveyed by night to the Lama monastery hidden in the mountains, he was lost as utterly as a pebble that is cast into the sea. One ray of hope remained, and only one. Ah Tsun was not a fool. He was a southern Chinese, and had small love for the peasants of the north. Moreover, he had faithfully served the Dashwood family for years, and he and Guy had been the best friends in the world since the latter was a baby. It now occurred to the boy that Ah Tsun, when his master did not return for his evening meal, would suspect that something was wrong. Either he would follow their tracks into the mountains, or he would immediately loose the sampan from her moorings, and proceed in all haste to Shanghai. In the event of this first alternative he would have no difficulty in tracing their footsteps on the lower slopes of the mountains, where the ground was sandy; but, once he reached the path that edged the precipice, there would be no footmarks to be seen. Guy searched his mind for a device. Above all, it was necessary to leave behind some trace of the route by which they were to be taken.

As his thoughts were thus occupied, one of the Chinese approached, and loosed the bonds that tied the prisoners' feet. They were then blindfolded; for the Boxers were solicitous that the whereabouts of their monastery should remain unknown. They had deprived Guy of his gun; but his cartridge-bag remained slung upon his shoulder. Shortly before they left the cave, he managed to thrust his bound hands into this. As quick as thought he broke open a dozen cartridges, and emptied the shot into the bottom of the bag. There, he knew, was a small hole, large enough to admit the escape of two or three shot at a time. Thus the shot would mark their route as torn paper indicates the course of a paper-chase.

By the light of the newly risen moon the party left the cave, and proceeded into the heart of the wild, inhospitable hills. For an hour they journeyed onward, and then dipped into a valley, at the foot of which the Boxer leader called a halt. Here the prisoners' eyes were unbandaged that they might see to descend a steep and uneven flight of steps running down beneath a wall.

As Guy set foot upon the first step he took in his surroundings with a quick glance on either side. This evidently was the monastery, for there on the left was a great iron gate that opened into a courtyard. Following a Chinese who went before with a lantern the prisoners were conducted through a long subterranean passage. At the end of this was another flight of steps, which led them into the nave of a temple where stood an enormous idol of Buddha. Here they were informed that they would be cast for the night into separate cells, to be led forth the following morning before the High Priest of the Scarlet Hand, who would certainly sentence them to be slowly tortured to death.

It was with a sinking feeling at the heart that Guy Dashwood heard the door close upon him in a cramped and noisome cell. The cold light of the moon penetrated through a small window, no more than a foot across, which was situated so high in the wall that the top was level with the ceiling. Upon the floor water lay in pools, in one of which Guy noticed a huge toad with palpitating throat. It was clear that his lease of life was short if he did not cast about him for some method of escape.

The window was barred with a single rod of iron; but this looked rotten, rusted by centuries of damp. Guy could not but think that if he could gain access to the window he could break this iron from its niches in the wall. However, it was first necessary to reach the window. Without delay he took his knife from his pocket, and proceeded to scrape the mortar from a brick about three feet from the ground.

For an hour he worked without ceasing, till the perspiration stood in drops upon his brow. Then he drew the brick from its place.

Placing his feet in the notch thus made, and holding to the wall by the tips of his fingers, he set to work at a second brick, considerably

higher in the wall. This was harder work still; his fingers became cramped and sore. Once or twice he fell backwards, and was obliged to mount again. He had removed the second brick, and was working at a third, when suddenly he heard footsteps rapidly approaching.

In all haste he replaced each brick in its place. Then, lying down upon the pile of mortar on the floor, he pretended to be asleep.

It was his janitor who entered — a thin, cadaverous Chinaman, with dark, malicious eyes, and an overhanging brow.

"Go before me," said the man. "You are about to be led into the presence of the High Priest himself."

Guy stretched his limbs, like one newly awakened. Then, yawning, he rose to his feet, and passed through the door of his cell. He trembled lest the man should see the mortar on the floor.

He came out in the courtyard of the monastery, and thence was conducted to the temple where was the gigantic image of Buddha. All around sat the Lama priests, dressed in their flowing robes. Not a word was spoken; an almost death-like stillness reigned in that vast and dimly lighted place. The High Priest himself sat in his chair of state at the foot of the image of Buddha. Before him was the opening in the floor, which, as Guy knew, led to the subterranean passage, and thence to liberty. Near the head of these steps stood Guy's friend and tutor. On either side of him were two gigantic Mongols, each stripped to the waist and armed with double-handed swords. Mr. Mercer was pale and haggard-looking. All night he had paced his cell, fearing nothing for himself, but wrung by the pangs of despair for the boy whose safety had been entrusted to his keeping.

As fearless as the man, the boy took his place by the side of his tutor. The Head Priest rose in his chair, and addressed them thus:—

"Foreign devils, you speak Chinese?"

Both bowed their heads.

"Good. Then I can speak my mind. You are accused of murdering three members of the Society of the Scarlet Hand, and for that you shall suffer death."

Mr. Mercer answered that in the first place they had been peaceably inclined; they had not been the aggressors. But the Head Priest took him up.

"You are not here to argue," he thundered, in a voice strangely loud for so small a man. "You have been brought before me to listen to the sentence I am about to pass. To-morrow morning at sunrise the bell of the monastery shall ring. That bell rings loudly. You will hear it in your prisons. And when you hear it you will know that you have but half an hour to live. Before the bell ceases to ring you begin to die by *li chi*, the death of a thousand cuts. Lead them back to prison, and feed them well to-day that they may be strong to die slowly to-morrow."

For a moment Guy met Mr. Mercer's eyes, and he read there the pardon that his old friend and tutor asked. A moment later each was borne away and cast into his cell.

No sooner had the lock been turned than Guy's knife was once more from his pocket. He was about to set to work when he heard the footsteps of the warder approaching. When the man entered the prisoner was seated on the floor with his head between his hands, as if plunged into the very depths of misery and despair. The man set down a bowl of rice and fish and a large jar of water, and then went his way.

All that day Guy Dashwood worked as a man can only work when his life depends upon the issue. By nightfall he had removed sufficient bricks to enable him to mount to the window and lay hands upon the bar. His heart beat wildly, lest after all his efforts should prove in vain. He grasped the iron in his hand, and wrenched with all his might. It did not break, as he had hoped, but it moved a fraction of an inch. That encouraged him to fresh effort. Placing his foot against the wall he set forth all the strength he could muster. The iron resisted for a moment. Then, with a shout of triumph that he was not able to stifle, the boy fell backwards to the floor, with the bar secure in his grasp.

He was not hurt. A man is seldom hurt in the hour of his triumph. Yet that triumph was short-lived; for, before the cry had passed from the boy's lips, the door was flung open, and Guy Dashwood stood in the presence of his gaoler.

The thin, cadaverous man took in the situation at a glance. He saw the prisoner upon the floor with the iron bar in his hand. He saw the gaping notches in the wall, and the powdered mortar on the floor. He let fall from his hand a bowl of food he was carrying, and in a flood of passion whipped a long, curved sword from his waist.

Guy sprang at his face and bore him backward. Both fell to the ground and rolled over and over, locked in each other's arms. The man's sword had fallen from his grasp. They fought with their bare hands. Each knew that he struggled for life.

Once or twice the man cried out; but that dungeon was wholly buried from the outside world, and no sound reached the courtyard far away.

It was a struggle for life in semi-darkness, beneath the surface of the earth. The Chinese was perhaps a shade stronger than his European foe; but Guy realised that not only his own life but the life also of his tutor depended upon his efforts. With teeth clenched and the veins standing forth upon his forehead, he strove to gain the mastery.

At last the man showed signs of failing strength. Guy, seizing his opportunity, stretched forth a hand, and laid hold upon the man's sword, which was within his reach. One blow with the hilt rendered his opponent senseless. The man's arms fell to his sides helplessly. Guy sprang to his feet.

To sever the man's pigtail from his head was the work of a second. He then divested himself of his coat and put on the gaoler's long Chinese robe. He had no time to make fast the pigtail to his hair; but he pinned it securely to the man's hat, and placing this upon his head, he hoped it would enable him to escape unnoticed from the monastery. This done, he locked his cell door from the inside. Next he cut the lining from his coat, and with the strips securely bound the man's feet and hands together. Then, by means of the holes he had made, he swarmed up the wall, and passed through the window at the top.

CHAPTER III

TO THE RESCUE

IT appeared at first that he had but jumped from the frying-pan into the fire. He found himself in a deep ditch from which exit seemed impossible. This ditch he followed for some distance, and came at last, much to his relief, to a place where there was a flight of steps. Mounting these he stood in the courtyard of the monastery.

For a moment he was undetermined how to act. Several Lamas were to be seen going to and from the temple. As far as his own safety was concerned, it would be wisest to go boldly into the temple and to descend the steps to the subterranean passage by which he could make his escape. The sun had set; the moon had not yet risen. It was not likely that he would be recognised in the semi-darkness. One thing only held him back—a desire to help his friend. But here he was confronted by a hundred difficulties. He did not know the whereabouts of the cell where Mr. Mercer was confined; and if he had known, it was not likely his key would fit the lock. There was nothing for it; he must make good his own escape, and return in all haste with succour for his friend. With his heart thumping against his ribs he shuffled across the courtyard as he had seen the lamas walk. With head bent low, as if in reverence, he ascended the temple steps. In the nave, before the image of Buddha, he went down on hands and knees, bowing his head to the floor as if he was lost in fervent prayer. He then rose and looked about him, to see if he had attracted undue attention. There were many priests in the temple, but all were engaged upon their affairs. Guy, as if idly loitering, moved nearer and nearer to the entrance of the subterranean passage. Then, both silently and quickly, he descended a dozen steps, and stood listening, almost unable to breathe. No one approached. No one appeared to have noticed his escape.

Then he fled. He fled for life and liberty; to save his friend and tutor from the most fiendish torture that has ever been invented by the faculties of man—the Chinese death of a thousand cuts.

Racing madly onward, he reached the steps, which, though it was quite dark, he took two at a time. He came out into the wide and starry night at the foot of the monastery wall, and made towards a tree which he had noticed when the bandage had been removed from his eyes. On reaching this he paused for a moment. There was one thing he had forgotten—he had no light, and without a light of some sort he could never find his way across the mountains.

Here Fate aided him—Fate, which had dealt so hardly with him hitherto. Almost as the thought crossed his mind, a big, round Chinese lantern was illuminated in the distance. Towards this spot he moved. When he had drawn nearer he found that it came from within a ruined joss-house, or rural temple. Within, at the foot of three hideous idols, an old peasant was on all fours, mumbling words of prayer. Without apology, or so much as asking leave, Guy rushed into the temple, bowled the old man over, and snatching the lantern from the hook upon which it hung, made off into the night.

It was not long before he found a path that led upwards to the hills; and this he rightly guessed was that by which they had come. Running madly onward, seldom pausing for

breath, he reached the path that skirted the edge of the cliff. And all along, the track was marked with the shot that had fallen from his cartridge-bag. This was well for him. In several places two paths met, and he had seldom to look far before he found which was the right one. It was about midnight when he reached the place where Mr. Mercer, Ah Tsun, and himself had pitched their camp the night before. At first it seemed that no trace of the camp remained, except the ashes of Ah Tsun's fire. He was about to leave, when his eye caught a piece of paper, secured to the ground by means of a fork. Guy picked this up, and by the light of the lantern read the words :—

"Mastar. gone for ilp. AH TSUN."

Gone for help! Bravo, Ah Tsun! But you do not know how urgently that help is needed. To-morrow morning at sunrise the bell of the monastery will ring, and that bell will mean death to your friend and mine. Such were the thoughts that flashed through the boy's mind. Without delay he must gain assistance from somewhere, and reach the monastery again before break of day.

Their sampan had gone from its moorings. Without doubt Ah Tsun had taken it back to Shanghai. To Shanghai, therefore, Guy must go. The river was more furious than ever. If he could secure a boat the current would take him to Shanghai in a few hours, or else dash him to eternity upon the rocks.

He set off running with all speed upon the river bank, and presently came to a place where a two-masted *woopan* lay at anchor. There was no one on board; the fisherman had evidently gone to his home at some adjacent village. Guy sprang on board, and let loose the painter.

There was no need to row. There was no need of a sail. The current bore the boat onward at a headlong, perilous velocity on the breast of its foaming tide. Guy, seizing the tiller in one hand, strained his eyes ahead in order to avoid the rocks that arose in mid-stream from the surface of the water. The light of the moon was sufficient for his purpose, though often he missed death by less than a foot. Sometimes he found himself in the midst of veritable rapids, where the boat sprang forth from the water like a leaping fish. Sometimes he was caught in an eddy; the *woopan* spun round and round like a cork, to be shot clear at last to continue its headlong course. The river was deserted save for him. The boy and his craft were alone upon its swift, relentless current.

Presently out of the night, above the swirling of the waters, there came a sound which made the boy's heart leap for joy. It was the shrill scream of a siren, and more than that, it was the steam siren of his father's yacht. A little after the green light on her starboard bow hove into view around an angle of the river. Guy put helm to port and bore across the river.

"Ahoy!" he shouted, at the full power of his lungs.

There came no answer from the yacht. Indeed, it would be hard for anyone on board to hear. The engines of the vessel throbbed against the current; her screw lashed the water into a long path of foam that showed white beneath the moon. If Guy was to board his father's yacht he must do so without assistance.

He came down stream direct for the prow of the steamer. Had there been a witness of that scene, for a moment he must have thought that there would be a collision, that the boy would certainly meet his death. However, Guy was throughout wholly collected and calm. When not a cable's length from the bows of the oncoming vessel he put the peak of his boat to starboard. The sides of the two vessels scraped together. The *woopan* rushed past like a thing demented, leaving Guy hanging by his hands to the brass railings of the yacht. A second later he was in his father's arms.

"Guy, tell me—what has happened?"

"We were captured by a band of Boxers, members of the Scarlet Hand. We have both been sentenced to the death of a thousand cuts. Mr. Mercer will be tortured at daybreak to-morrow if we cannot reach the monastery in time."

Mr. Dashwood rushed to the engine speaking-tube.

"Make more headway!" he yelled.

"We're full speed ahead now, sir," answered the man from below.

"Put on all you can. Mr. Mercer's life is in danger. Where is he now?" he asked, turning to his son.

"He is at a monastery in the mountains. I can guide you there, if you have sufficient men."

"I have twenty of the Shanghai police on board, and fifteen members of the club. I feared something of this sort might happen when I let you go. We are all well armed, and it will be all right if we can only get there in time."

Hour by hour, whilst the moon dropped lower in the heavens, Mr. Dashwood's yacht strained up stream against the current. The first grey marks of dawn were already in the sky when they gained the place where their

little expedition had pitched its camp by the riverside.

There they disembarked in the greatest haste. They were a somewhat motley company. There were policemen—British, Chinese, and Sikh; there was a very fat Chinese detective, and there were gentlemen in evening dress with bandoleers across their shirts. Led by Guy, they penetrated the mountains, and reached the cave where the fight with the Boxers had taken place. Thence the boy guided them by means of the shot upon the path. As they progressed the dawn grew apace. Presently, when they came to a turning in the road, Guy was able to select his way without the assistance of a lantern. When at last they came down the steep sides of the valley the first rays of the sun fell upon the grey, gaunt walls of the Lama monastery, whence a bell was ringing in a tall pagoda tower.

They were unseen as they approached. The walls of the building were windowless; and besides, the priests of the Scarlet Hand were that morning gathered together to behold a spectacle of a very different nature. The courtyard was crowded, save in the centre, where there was an open space. In this open space a crucifix had been erected, upon which Guy and Mr. Mercer were to die.

When news was brought that the younger prisoner had managed to make his escape, loud execrations arose on every hand. The other Englishman, at least, would die a double death. It was then that Mercer was brought forth; he was stripped to the waist. His lip quivered for a moment when he caught sight of the crucifix. But he recovered himself in an instant, and looked that terrible assembly boldly in the face. He had been bound to the stake, the executioner had even approached, when a savage British cheer arose from twenty throats.

At that moment down the steps of the temple came the relief party, headed by Guy. As one man the Lamas drew their swords and retired to the courtyard wall. The combat that ensued was brief as it was fierce. The Lamas, though superior in numbers, were overpowered by better arms and better men. In less than ten minutes the Head Priest himself was begging for mercy on his knees.

It was then that the fat Chinese detective from Shanghai stepped forward. He carried in his hand a warrant for the arrest of the leaders of the Secret Society of the Scarlet Hand. And thus it was that the tide of a revolution was stemmed that might have led to the deaths of thousands of Europeans.

The Story of Leap Year.

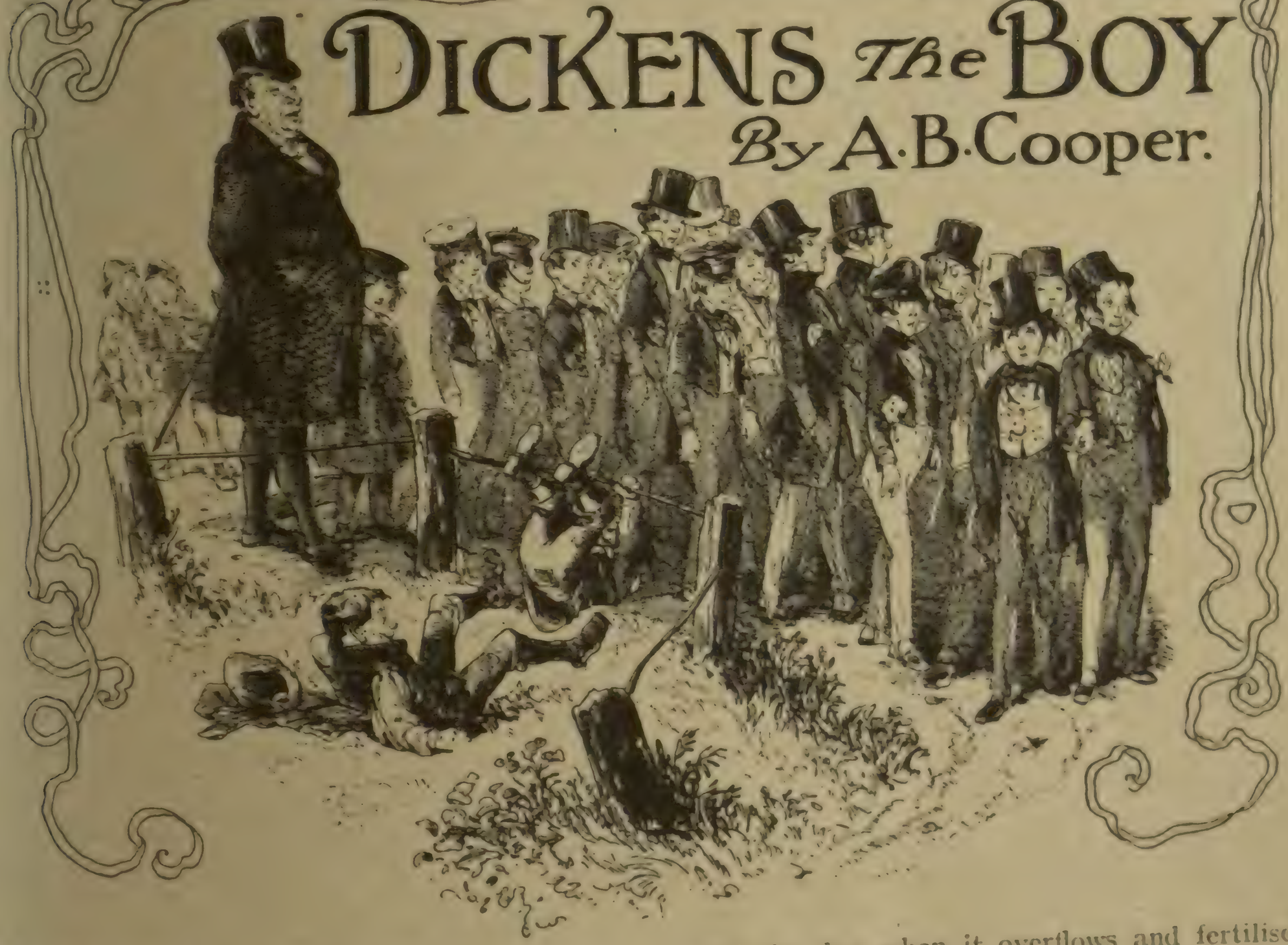
Mankind had lived a good many years before it learned how to count them properly; but we now know that a year contains 365 days, 5 hours, 28 minutes, 49 seconds. By one of the earliest known ways of reckoning, a year lasted during the waxing and waning of twelve moons. But this of course was shorter than a solar year, with the result that the seasons and the months did not march in step, as it were, and the months of ripened fruit would become after a decade or so the time of bare trees and frost.

To remedy this, an extra month was "thrown in" from time to time, and this was the method adopted by the Roman pontiffs, who found the power thus given them of playing fast and loose with the calendar extremely useful for extending or curtailing a dignitary's period of office or the life of a lease. But the reforming zeal of Julius Cæsar, with an astronomer's aid, inaugurated a more orderly reckoning. In order to give the Julian Calendar a fair start, the year 46 B.C. ("the year of confusion") had 445 days, and thenceforth each year was to have 365 days, with an extra day in every fourth year, this year being known as "Leap Year." A mistake was made, however, in the working of this calendar, Leap Year being counted every three years instead of every four. Augustus Cæsar adjusted the inaccuracy in the year 8 B.C., by ordering that no leap years be counted for twelve years.

In this condition the calendar remained for more than fifteen hundred years, when it was discovered that the solar year in reality contained eleven minutes and a few seconds less than 365¼ days. The remedy for this was applied in 1582 by Pope Gregory the thirteenth, who annulled ten days, by counting the 5th October as the 15th, and ordained that three of the appointed leap years in every four hundred years should not be counted as such, the last year of each century being counted as an ordinary year, except when it is divisible by four hundred. The year 1900, it will be remembered, was not a leap year and neither were 1800 nor 1700, but the year 2000 will be so. Old England was one of the last countries to adopt the Gregorian reckoning, and it was only in the face of much opposition from the uneducated, who had a vague notion that they were somehow being robbed, that a bill was passed in 1751 annulling eleven days in September of the following year. The old Julian Calendar is still followed by Russia, so English and Russian dates do not tally. The Russian New Year commences thirteen days later than ours

DICKENS *the* BOY

By A. B. Cooper.



IT is difficult to imagine some men as boys. What kind of a boy was Napoleon Bonaparte, for instance? It is hard to imagine him playing leap-frog, or marbles, or indulging in any of the frivolities of boyhood. On the other hand, there have been men—ay, and great and heroic men, too—who, like Peter Pan, never grew up. Nelson was one such; so was Lincoln, so was Drake, and, in rather a different way, so was Dickens. All their lives these men kept the boy's heart in their breasts. Perhaps they were rather old boys when they were young, and they remained old boys to the end.

Personally, I like that kind of man. The Napoleonic cast of man may be necessary to the world occasionally, but I think we could spare twenty Bonapartes for one Dickens, or Nelson, or Lincoln. Strong men whose hearts never grow old, or hard, or bitter, or callous, or cruel are a great gift to the world, and Charles Dickens was one of these.

Dickens's boyhood and youth were the most important periods of his whole life. He was like a great storage battery, collecting the power with which he was later to electrify the world. His boyhood was a gigantic embankment like the one at Assouan, which collects all the water that comes down from the great watersheds until the day when it overflows and fertilises a mighty country. He did not know it at the time—what boy does?—but every single thing that happened to him in his boyhood went unmistakably to the making of the man and his great books. So, if this brief sketch of the boyhood of Dickens should impress upon the readers of THE CAPTAIN the stupendous value of the first twenty years of life, its main object will be fulfilled. Blot out the impressions of early life from the memory of Dickens and you blot out Dickens. His books, from their first page to their last page, simply teem with the scenes, persons, and mental images of his childhood and youth.

On February 7th, 1812, Charles Dickens was born at Landport, in Portsea. His father, John Dickens, was a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, and was at that time stationed at the Portsmouth Dockyard. He was the second child, his sister Fanny—his favourite playfellow—being a couple of years older. The future novelist's full name is Charles John Huffham Dickens, but he always signed himself "Charles," and you will find that Christian name only on his grave in Westminster Abbey.

Dickens is one of the many great little men. He was "small for his age" all his life. As a

kiddie he was a mere shrimp, and he was weakly and ailing too. He had a tremendous admiration for boys who were big and strong and athletic; but he was none of these things himself, and had no natural aptitude for shooting straight at the marble-strewn ring, or defending a wicket, or kicking a ball, or leaping a fence.

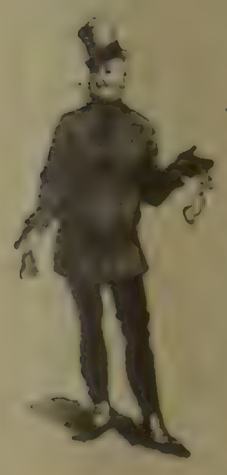
But he learned to read—taught by his mother—before ever he went to school; and it was well he did, for his schooldays were tragically few, and had he not had a natural aptitude for picking up any scraps of knowledge which happened to come his way, he might easily have ended in the gutter instead of the Abbey. His father, who was not much of a bookman himself, had speculated in a series of cheap "masterpieces," which were then being issued from the press—probably the first of a numerous progeny. These books proved a perfect godsend to the boy, and undoubtedly largely account for the eighteenth century manner of all his earlier novels. Dickens has left us a personal account of his childhood's reading, and an amazing account it assuredly is.

A portrait of Dickens at the age of twenty-nine.

My father had a small collection of books in a little room upstairs to which I had access (for it adjoined my own) and which nobody else in our house ever troubled. From that blessed little room "Tom Jones," "Roderick Random," "Peregrine Pickle," "Humphrey Clinker," "The Vicar of Wakefield," "Don Quixote," "Gil Blas," and "Robinson Crusoe" came out, a glorious host, to keep me company. It is astonishing to me now, how I found time, in the midst of my pornings and blunderings over heavier themes, to read those books as I did. I have sustained my own idea of "Roderick Random" for a month at a stretch. I verily believe. I had a greedy relish for a few volumes of voyages and travels—I forget what now—that were on those shelves; and for days and days I can remember to have gone about my region of the house armed with the centre-piece out of an old set of boot-trees, the perfect realisation of Captain Somebody of the royal British Navy, in danger of being beset by savages, and resolved to sell his life at a great price. . . . When I think of it, the picture always rises in my mind of a summer evening, the boys at play in the churchyard, and I sitting on my bed, reading as if for life. Every barn in the neighbourhood, every stone in the church, and every foot of the churchyard had some association of its own, in my mind, connected with these books, and stood for some locality made famous in them. I have seen Tom Pipes go climbing up the church steeple; I have watched Strap, with the knapsack on his back, stopping to rest himself upon the wicket-gate; and I *know* that Commodore Trunnion held that club with Mr. Pickle, in the parlour of our little village alehouse.

Though Dickens was born at Portsea, his childhood is inseparably connected with the pleasant county of Kent, for ere he was promoted to knickerbockers—if such articles of apparel had then been invented, which we doubt—the family removed, first for a short period to Norfolk Street, Bloomsbury, and then to Chatham. Rochester, as distinct from Chatham itself, became ever afterwards the place of his dreams. He began his literary career there in the opening chapters of "Pickwick," and he ended it there in the tragical pages of "Edwin Drood"; whilst the whole plot of "Great Expectations," you will remember, is laid in that cathedral city. Between these periods he was always going to and fro, like a Canterbury pilgrim, along the roads of Kent. Here is a stray paragraph from those wonderful early chapters of "David Copperfield," so many of which are almost a literal transcript of his own early days, which shows the photographic impression his early sojourn in the three towns had made upon his imagination.

I got through three and twenty miles on the straight road, though not very easily, for I was new to that kind of toil. I see myself, as evening closes in, coming over the bridge at Rochester, footsore and tired, and eating bread that I had bought for supper. One or two little houses, with the notice, "Lodgings for Travellers" hanging out, had tempted me; but I was afraid of spending the few pence I had, and was even more afraid of the vicious looks of the trampers I had met or overtaken. I sought no shelter, therefore, but the sky; and toiling into Chatham—which, in that night's aspect, is a mere dream of chalk, and drawbridges,



and mastless ships in a muddy river, roofed like Noah's arks—crept at last upon a sort of grass-grown battery overhanging a lane, where a sentry was walking to and fro. Here I lay down near a cannon . . . and slept soundly till morning.

It is doubtful whether the boy Dickens ever tramped from London to Chatham as David Copperfield did, but he knew every inch of the road between the two places nevertheless. He was only a very small boy indeed when the family left London for Chatham, and rode along this very same road in the coach, and he was only ten years of age when the family again packed up their "traps" and returned to the metropolis. They left Charles behind for a few weeks this time, and he has placed it on record how he made the lonely journey all by himself in the old "Commodore" to rejoin his parents. He says:—

There were no other inside passengers, and I consumed my sandwiches in solitude and dreariness, and it rained hard all the way, and I thought life sloppier than I expected to find it.

It is probable that the place which Rochester ever held in the affections of Dickens is largely accounted for by the violent contrast between his life there and his life during the next few years in London. At Rochester, as far as the youngster could see, his prospect in life was rosy. His father was a kindly, easy-going man, his mother was a pleasant, attractive, lovable woman, and they both delighted in displaying the precocious talents of their firstborn son. Nothing delighted the elder Dickens more than to set Charles singing comic songs, or reciting humorous passages, standing upon a table in the midst of his friends, to the accompaniment of tumultuous applause. Shakespeare tells us that there is a Providence which shapes our ends, and it is quite possible that Providence, seeing that the lad was in a fair way to be spoiled by a pernicious though pleasant mixture of adulation, casual education, smug prosperity, and easy success, plunged him suddenly up to the neck in a sea of trouble, which, as it failed to drown him, probably did him a world of good. Whatever may be the worth of this theory, it is certainly possible that we should never have had "Pickwick," or "Copperfield," or "Chuzzlewit," or any of the immortal novels, but for the experiences of the two or three years which succeeded that "sloppy" ride in the coach.

Perhaps the identification of the immortal Micawber with the father of Dickens, as well as that of Mrs. Dickens with the equally successful portrait of Mrs. Nickleby, has often been insisted upon unduly. Yet there can be no doubt that many of the leading traits in the respective characters of his parents were transferred to these fictitious people. This tendency to identify the characters which appear in the novels of Dickens must not, however, be carried too far. Certain it is that the novelist, in spite of his father's neglect of the boy's education—a neglect which Dickens never ceased to deplore—and of the misfortunes which he brought upon himself and his family by his easy-going, careless good nature, retained to the end the kindliest sentiments towards his father, whose declining years he helped materially to console.

The novelist's wife, who died in 1879.

But there was no doubt as to the tragical nature of the change which came into his life now. It may be that some boys would not have taken it greatly to heart. But Charles Dickens did. Like many boys born with imaginative genius, he had early conceived some idea of his own exceptional powers and gifts. We know, for instance, that he had often gazed at a certain house on Gad's Hill, and had made a boyish resolve some day to make it his own. We know that, unlike most boys, he yearned for a first-class education. He planned his own future. He would go to school; he would read books; he would make a great name. He considered his family's position at Chatham an eminently respectable and desirable one, and sufficiently elevated above the general plane of life to make it an excellent starting-place

for any ultimate peak of eminence to which he might aspire.

It was this early, unmistakable ambition, these rosy intentions, this splendid landscape of his future life, which made the gloomy days which followed doubly dark for the lad. His father utterly and irretrievably failed, and, being unable to pay his debts, he was lodged in the Marshalsea Prison—which every good Captainite will remember is described in "Little Dorrit."

Charles was ten years of age when he made that memorable journey in the coach to London to rejoin his family. He found it settled in a little house in Bayham Street, Camden Town, and must have been instantly struck with the unmistakable change in the status which neighbourhood is supposed to confer. To-day, of course, it is one of the poorest parts of London, but at that time it was much nearer the country; and although Dickens used to say that a washerwoman lived next door, and a Bow Street runner over the way, yet as the open fields were within sight of it, there might be some exaggeration in his description. Presently, as the monetary affairs of the head of the house went from bad to worse, a great scheme was started which included the taking of a house in Gower Street, where Mrs. Dickens meant to keep school—just as Mrs. Micawber did in "David Copperfield." It is on record how little Charles took innumerable handbills from door to door all round the neighbourhood, and how, in spite of this wide advertisement and the attractive notice on the doorplate, no single boy or girl ever responded to the invitation. It was on a par with many other Quixotic or Micawberish schemes. They were as barren in their results as they were futile in their origin.

Then came the crowning calamity. John

Dickens often entertained parties of friends with readings from his own works, and many of the leading literary and artistic men of the day attended these gatherings. In this illustration (after Daniel Maclise) he is shown reading "The Chimes," at 58, Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Dickens was arrested for debt, and lodged in the Marshalsea Prison, in the Borough. Readers of "Little Dorrit" will know the sort of life which this incarceration entailed. There was plenty of freedom within the prison walls. It was a sort of genteel imprisonment. But unless help fell straight down from heaven, as it were, a man might very easily spend the rest of his natural life there, loafing about doing nothing, and, incidentally, getting deeper and deeper into the mire of indebtedness.

That was what happened to the Dickens family. Indeed, it is probable that the father was better off than his wife and children, although he was in prison and they were not.

Their income was nil, and Charles's chief occupation during the earlier days of his father's imprisonment was that of carrying, by dark and devious paths, various articles of furniture—beginning with the least necessary, and working by painful degrees to the more necessary—to the pawnbroker's round the corner.

Then a would-be philanthropist stepped upon the scene, in the shape of a relative of Charles's mother. His name was James Lamert, and he was the proprietor of a blacking factory, situated near Hungerford Market, a site now occupied by Charing Cross Station and several palatial hotels. From Dickens's own description of the neighbourhood as it then was, I should imagine it was a good deal like the neighbourhood of Lower Thames Street to-day. Here is the novelist's own description:—

> It was the last house at the bottom of a very narrow street, curving down hill to the river, with some stairs at the end where people took boat. It was a crazy old house with a wharf of its own, abutting on the water when the tide was in, and on the mud when the tide was out, and literally overrun with rats. Its panelled rooms, discoloured with the dirt and smoke of a hundred years, I dare say; its decaying floors and staircase; the squeaking and scuffling of the old grey rats down in the cellars; and the dirt and rottenness of the place are things, not of many years ago, in my mind, but of the present instant.

Although this change in the boy's circumstances made a deep and lasting impression upon his mind, and appeared at the time to put the extinguisher upon the flickering candle of his hopes, yet it proved, from the point of view of his art, by no means an unmixed evil. One of its earliest effects was to bring him acquainted with the nooks and corners, the by-ways, courts, and alleys of a large area of the metropolis which included some of its most interesting localities, and at the same time to bring him into daily contact with the odd characters which dwelt in these out-of-the-way and distinctly unfashionable spots.

If you will turn to "David Copperfield" again you will find a description, drawn from the life—his own life—of the sort of training which this unhappy time afforded to a boy possessing the temperament of Charles Dickens—his retentive memory, his sympathetic heart, his companionableness, and his innate literary ability. He says:—

> I could not resist the stale pastry put out for sale at half-price at the pastrycooks' doors, and spent in that the money I should have kept for my dinner. Then I went without my dinner, or bought a roll or a slice of pudding. I remember two pudding-shops between which I was divided, according to my finances. One was in a court close to St. Martin's Church—at the back of the church—which is now removed altogether. The pudding at that shop was made of currants, and was rather a special pudding, but was dear, twopennyworth not being larger than a pennyworth of more ordinary pudding.
>
> A good shop for the latter was in the Strand—somewhere in that part which has been rebuilt since. It was a stout pale pudding, heavy and flabby, and with great flat raisins in it, stuck in it whole at wide distances apart. It came up hot about my time every day, and many a day did I dine off it. When I dined regularly and handsomely I had a saveloy and a penny loaf, or a fourpenny plate of red beef from a cook's shop; or a plate of bread and cheese and a glass of beer, from a miserable old public-house called the Lion, or the Lion and something else that I have forgotten.
>
> Once I remember carrying my own bread (which I had brought from home in the morning) under my arm, wrapped in a piece of paper like a book, and going to a famous alamode beef-house near Drury Lane, and ordering a "small plate" of that delicacy to eat with it. What the waiter thought of such a strange little apparition coming in all alone I don't know; but I can see him now, staring at me as I ate my dinner, and bringing up the other waiter to look. I gave him a halfpenny for himself, and I wish he hadn't taken it.
>
> We had half an hour, I think, for tea. When I had money enough, I used to get half a pint of ready-made coffee and a slice of bread and butter. When I had none I used to look at a venison shop in Fleet Street; or I have strolled, at such a time, as far as Covent Garden Market, and stared at the pineapples. I was fond of wandering about the Adelphi, because it was a mysterious place, with those dark arches. . . .
>
> I know I do not exaggerate, unconsciously or unintentionally, the scantiness of my resources, or the difficulties of my life. I know that I worked from morning until night, with common men and boys, a shabby child. I know that I lounged about the streets, insufficiently and unsatisfactorily fed. I know that, but for the mercy of God, I might easily have been, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or vagabond.

We need not dwell longer upon this phase of Charles Dickens's life. He may have been conscious in later days that it had been an invaluable one from some points of view, but he never spoke of it to anyone—not even to his wife—until in the very height of his fame and prosperity he one day confided it to his future biographer, John Forster. Happily, it did not last very long, or it is more than probable that the sensitive lad would have been crushed under the heel of circumstances. Mr. Dickens was released from prison—having been left a legacy which paid off his debts and left a little over; and eventually, though not immediately, Dickens was removed from the blacking factory, and from his daily work of pasting labels upon

blacking bottles, and once more was sent to school.

There is very little to record of the remainder of his schooldays, except his great interest in amateur theatricals, a passion which never left him to the day of his death. He left school finally at the age of fourteen—a very early age, considering the very broken time he had put in there before going to the blacking factory—and obtained a situation in a lawyer's office in Gray's Inn, where his weekly wages were 13s. 6d. Later he removed to Lincoln's Inn, to another lawyer's office.

Hope, however, had returned with his father's release from prison, and his own release from slavery; and it is certain that he had relighted the candle of his ambition, and that it was beginning to burn brightly. There can be no doubt that this dabbling with the law was merely a putting on of time until the gates of the literary world opened to him. Yet, like everything else which came into Dickens's life, all the experiences he had and all the people he met, went into the melting-pot to be coined into the currency of the race in the future. His books are redolent of the law, of the Inns of Court, of proctors, or sergeants, of advocates, of attorneys—and more especially of their clerks, from Uriah Heep to Guppy.

Charles Dickens in his study at Tavistock House, in 1859.
From the portrait by W. P. Frith, R.A.
Forster Collection.

Undoubtedly the father of Dickens must have been a man of considerable resource and determination of character, for, after his sad experience in the Marshalsea, and although arrived at middle life, he succeeded in qualifying himself to be a Press reporter in the gallery of the House of Commons. It was his father's experience in this line which suggested the same course to his son, and Charles commenced that struggle with shorthand so graphically described in "David Copperfield," which resulted in his becoming probably the most expert shorthand writer in England, and immortalising the Press Gallery by the very fact of his having at one time been an occupant of it.

Speaking of this part of his life Dickens says:—

I never could have done what I have done without the habits of punctuality, order, and diligence, without the determination to concentrate myself on one object at a time, no matter how quickly its successor should come upon its heels, which I then formed. Whatever I have tried to do in life I have tried with all my heart to do well; whatever I have devoted myself to, I have devoted myself to completely; in great aims and in small, I have always been thoroughly in earnest. I have never believed it possible that any natural or improved ability can claim immunity from the companionship of the steady, plain, hard-working qualities, and hope to gain its end. Some happy talent, and some fortunate opportunity, may form the two sides of the ladder on which some men mount, but the rounds of that ladder must be made of stuff to stand wear and tear; and there is no substitute for thorough-going, ardent, and sincere earnestness.

It was this spirit which made Dickens work "like a nigger." He spent hundreds of hours in the British Museum Reading-room and certainly an equal time wrestling with his shorthand. You remember that funny, though probably exaggerated, description of his struggles:—

The changes that were rung upon dots, which in such a position meant such a thing, and in such another position something else entirely different; the wonderful vagaries that were played by circles; the unaccountable consequences that resulted from marks like flies' legs; the tremendous effects of a curve in a wrong place—not only troubled my waking hours, but reappeared before me in sleep. When I had groped my way blindly through these

difficulties, and had mastered the alphabet, there then appeared a procession of new horrors, called arbitrary characters; the most despotic characters I have ever known; who insisted, for instance, that a thing like the beginning of a cobweb meant expectation, and that a thing like a pen-and-ink sky-rocket stood for disadvantageous. When I had fixed these wretches in my mind, I found that they had driven everything else out of it; then, beginning again, I forgot them; while I was picking them up, I dropped the other fragments of the system; in short, it was almost heart-breaking.

However, as we have seen, he had his reward, and went into the gallery of the House of Commons as parliamentary reporter to the *Morning Chronicle*, at that time an influential paper. Dickens was nineteen years old when he entered the gallery of the old House of Commons, and he had spent two years already as an ordinary reporter, there being no vacancy in the gallery. Two years later still he drifted out of the river of journalism into the estuary, if not the ocean, of literature, by a sketch in the old *Monthly Magazine*. He has himself described the fear and trembling with which he dropped this contribution into the letter-box of the office of the magazine—"up a dark court in Fleet Street"—and he has also left on record his feelings when it appeared in print.

I walked out to Westminster Hall and turned into it for half an hour, because my eyes were so dimmed with joy and pride that they could not bear the street, and were not fit to be seen there.

So, as he is now of age, we may leave him, for he is no longer Dickens the Boy. He has left us, as the result of a life of almost unexampled labour, a magnificent heritage which year by year seems to grow dearer to his countrymen all the world over. Some exaggeration, often amounting to sheer caricature, we must allow was one of the faults of Dickens—if fault it may be called, which is, after all, a form of humour. It is as a great humorist that Dickens will be remembered through the ages. He had an unerring eye for the humorous side of things, as well as an inimitable way of presenting it to his readers. He had, moreover, a tender, compassionate, lovable heart, and often ran the risk of spoiling his books rather than that they should fail to pull down some stronghold of oppression and wrong. He was not only a great novelist, but also a great reformer; for anything which Dickens ridiculed or denounced came tumbling down as if an earthquake had shaken it. Such reforms as the abolition of public execution, the reform of hospital and private nursing, the abolition of schools like Dotheboys Hall, the extinction of prisons like old Newgate (as well as imprisonment for debt), the greater care for children, and the humanising of the Poor Law are, among many other reforms, things which we owe very largely to the writings of Charles Dickens.

But who shall ever reckon up the value of the laughter and good humour which he has produced? It is no exaggeration to say that he has added to the happiness of untold millions; and I am of opinion that he would have considered such an achievement to be the best success to which he could have aspired.

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The Marshalsea Prison, wherein Dickens's father was incarcerated for debt. Charles Dickens constantly visited him here.

The Manœuvres of Maxwell

A Really Fine Story of School Sport

By NIGEL SCOTT - - Illustrated by H. M. Brock

I

THE prep. bell rang, and just before it stopped, when all further movement would have been banned, the door of Maxwell and Reid's study opened, and Duggan slid in.

"Just on time," he gasped. "That beast Holland's waiting at the bottom of the corridor with his cane; I had no idea it was just on bell."

"What's the good of that rotten clock of yours, then?" said Reid. Duggan had brought back a rather special one that term. "Stopped already, I suppose."

"I hope so," returned Duggan, venomously. "That beast has got it."

Maxwell and Reid expressed much indignation in vigorous whispers, but no surprise. Since he had attained the dignity of corridor captain, with the additional ægis of a Twenty-two and Third XV. cap, Holland had developed a most obnoxious habit of commandeering the property of small boys—borrowing, he called it. It is true that he returned the goods in course of time, when they were susceptible of being returned, which was not always the case. But that did not reconcile his victims to this practice, as much as he seemed to think it ought to.

"His watch had stopped, and he said he needed to know the time more than I did," pursued Duggan. "Maxwell, can't you think of some way of scoring off him?"

Maxwell was a short, but very sturdy boy of about fifteen. During his three years at Morlea he had acquired a well-deserved reputation for ingenuity, not always unperverted, in all sorts of unexpected directions. But on this occasion he could not help his friend.

"Don't see how," he said. "Though the clock won't go any more, quite likely. But old Cocky will jolly well score off us if we don't get on with this beastly Livy; it's your turn to look out words, Duggan. There's the dictionary."

"Hullo, bikkies!" exclaimed Duggan, brightening up, as he saw a paper bag in a pigeon-hole of the desk, behind the book. "Give us some."

"Not till we've done this rotten con.," replied Maxwell. "Come on, let's get it over."

They set to work, and in about three-quarters of an hour had finished their Livy, and Duggan slammed the dictionary and held out his hand for biscuits. Reid pulled the bag out by its lower end, but instead of handing them round, he suddenly scowled angrily. Then he emptied the contents of the bag on to a low table by Maxwell's chair, counted them, and then, putting his hand into the bag again, took out two more bags rolled into balls.

"Someone's been at them again," he exclaimed, forgetting, in his wrath, to keep to the whisper alone permitted in Holland's realm during prep. "There's at least a quarter of a pound gone, and these put in to make it look right. Who does it?"

"Who?" echoed Duggan, with unrestrained wrath. "Why, that beast!"

The door opened without warning, and the beast himself, who had been prowling silently in search of prey, appeared framed in the doorway. He did not speak for a few moments, but glared at the evildoers, enjoying the effect of his sudden apparition upon them.

"May I ask the meaning of this noise?" he inquired at last in colourless tones. He always carried out his duties, as he interpreted them, with the appearance at least of passionless calm.

"Someone's been stealing our biscuits," replied Reid. "Look—there ought to be at least thirty to the pound, fruit biscuits. Maxwell and I have had four, but there are only seventeen left, and someone has stuffed this paper in."

"I fail to see what that has to do with me," returned Holland, in such tones as might

Jove might have used to a blackbeetle. "You had better tell Telson's about it. What concerns me is that brewing is not allowed in prep. Put them back in the bag."

Reid obeyed, and Holland possessed himself of them. "As you can't obey rules, I shall confiscate them," he said, preparing to leave.

"But, Holland," said Maxwell, suddenly. "Eating biscuits isn't brewing. Everyone——" Holland turned on him savagely, but did no more.

"Not in my corridor, if I can stop it," he retorted. "Hullo, where did you get that table?" he added, pointing to the neatly made, two storeyed tea-table by Maxwell's chair. "Did you make it yourself?"

"Yes, I did," replied Maxwell. Among his other unexpected accomplishments, he was a very clever carpenter.

"It's rather well made," remarked Holland, as he examined it, at which his hearers felt uneasy. "Much too good for smugs like you." Just as they had expected. "It deserves translation to a more august atmosphere. I'll borrow it for a bit, I think."

"But it isn't painted yet," objected Maxwell.

"Then get some dark green paint and have it ready before next Saturday," retorted Holland. "By Jove! just the thing I wanted for brewing. You shall have it back at the end of term, unless it's smashed first."

"Beast! Brute! Cad! Skunk!" was but the mildest collection of what Reid and Duggan said when the great man was out of earshot.

"What's the good of all that?" said Maxwell, when they had finished. He had not joined in the commination ceremony. "It doesn't do him any harm, and only makes you hoarse."

"Don't try and be funny," hissed Reid.

"I am going to all the same," replied Maxwell. And his eyes twinkled, and he smiled with his lips closed.

"What are you going to do?" queried Duggan, for these were dangerous signals for Maxwell's enemies.

"Did you notice that he didn't lam us for talking out loud?" observed Maxwell, irrelevantly. "Nor yet for telling him that eating bikkies isn't brewing, as it isn't?"

"Fathead!" commented Reid.

"Prize idiot!" observed Duggan.

Maxwell laughed silently.

"That means that he did take our bikkies, and knows that we know it," he said, "and his high mightiness felt just a little uncomfortable over it; I saw that plain enough. Cheer up, I've got an idea, though I don't quite see yet how it is going to be done. But it will be done."

"What do you mean, you funny ass?"

"Wait and see," replied Maxwell, and was promptly kicked. But he only laughed and would say no more.

II

TENFIELD had been very strong the year before, but a wholesale exodus at the end of the summer term had left them with only three Third XV. caps, the third and lowest football honour; Peel, the captain of the House Fifteen; Holland and Oswald, with one other undecorated member of last year's team. These reactions come inevitably to houses that have been extra strong for years, and when they come they mean tribulation for the unfortunate captain.

So Peel found it, at all events. House matches had not yet begun, but the results of preliminary friendly games had not disposed him to look forward to them. The climax came on the second Saturday of term. Lower game had played at 2.15, and had done distinctly well, and at 3.15 upper game had met a rather strong house with disastrous results.

It was the old story of the weakest link in the chain. Tenfield had a scrum that promised to be extremely useful under Peel's leadership, Oswald was a more than ordinarily smart half, and the other half was fair. But the three-quarters were very bad, and they had no back at all; and Holland, who was a useful forward, had played as an extra three-quarter to supply the deficiency, and had done so with indifferent success. Whenever their opponents' men got away, they ran in with almost monotonous consistency, and the game ended at last amid painful silence.

None of the three great men spoke till they reached their house. Then Holland at last broke the silence.

"I say, this looks cheerful for house match," he said.

"Don't talk of it," growled Peel. "It makes me sick. Besides, you were rotten. You'd better go back to the scrum. You're some use there, you're none at three-quarter."

"You'll feel better when you've had your tea," said Holland. "It's my turn to-day. We can talk it over then."

Each of the three great men supplied the brew in turn. By rights, having played first hour, lower game should have vacated the changing room by this time, but as they reached

if the door opened and Maxwell came out, putting on his coat. Holland felt sore at the ignominious display he had given, and to relieve his feelings he got into action promptly.

"You seem to think the whole place belongs to you," he said scathingly, "just because you can hammer nails into a piece of wood, I suppose. Why didn't you get changed at once? Where's the lavatory captain?"

"I'm sorry; I remembered something I wanted to do in my study," replied Maxwell stolidly.

"And so forgot that we——" began Holland.

"Oh, get out of the way, Maxwell," interrupted Peel. "You want your tea, too, Holland," he added as Maxwell vanished.

"Nasty, vicious temper," commented Oswald. "Besides, Maxwell is a great king. I was watching lower game before you chaps came up, and he——"

"I don't want to hear about lower game," broke in Holland. "I want to get changed and brew. So don't dawdle about."

Twenty minutes later the three big boys had changed and were in Holland's study, considerably cheered by the sight of the meal which Holland's fag had laid out on the famous table, now duly painted dark green, which had only been translated to its present august atmosphere on the previous evening. The paint had taken a long time to dry, Maxwell had explained.

"Hullo, that's a deuced swell affair," remarked Peel. "Who did you pinch that from?"

"Oh, Maxwell lent me that; he made it," replied Holland, at which the other two smiled. They knew Holland's little failing well. They did not at all approve of it, and would have had no sympathy for him if he came to grief over it, even at the hands of a small man. But it was not their business to interfere, and it rather amused them.

"That accounts for your affectionate greeting to him just now," remarked Oswald. "One of these days, one of them will sell you a pup. Anyhow, it's rash to experiment with home-made tables. I hope it's guaranteed."

"Don't be an ass; it's strong enough," returned Holland, tapping it. "I must say that Maxwell, though he is a conceited young beast, does things thoroughly when he is about them. I thought it'd be handy for brew to-day. Fall to."

"By the bye," went on Oswald, after a brief interval. "I told you I was watching lower game. Well, young Maxwell is our man for house back."

"Splendid idea," observed Holland, satirically. "And let's have Bowing and a few more of the kids in as well."

"He's rather small, certainly," said Peel. "How would he manage if we drew against Ford's, and he had to collar the Elephant?"

The Elephant was a gigantic young man, pulling the scale at fourteen stone, whose private name was Barry, and who was captain of the School Fifteen.

"He'd collar him for sure," replied Oswald, "at all events. Anyhow, if we don't want to make a holy show of ourselves, we had better give him a trial. I know he's short, but he's a hefty young ruffian all the same, and he's jolly quick on his feet. Anyhow, he's our only back."

"I believe you're right," said Peel, meditatively. Oswald's judgment was notoriously sound on football matters. "I'll try him on Tuesday. Tea, please, Holland."

"Well, it's your affair," said Holland, taking Peel's cup. "But I think it's a mistake to shove too small a man up." He knew they were right, but the consciousness of having recently played Maxwell two low tricks made him feel vindictive. "I say, shift a bit, Oswald," he added, as he prepared to fill Peel's cup. "I want to move the table; it's a bit too close to my elbow. Thanks. Anyhow, don't let him think himself too superlatively——"

Crash!

While speaking, Holland had taken hold of the pretty green table, and had begun to move it carefully, but the legs nearest him had caught in a strand worn loose in the carpet, and caused a slight shock which made the teacups rattle. He raised it clear and then set it down, but as he did so, without warning, it resolved itself into its component parts, precipitating teapot, cups and biscuits into his chair, and over his legs, in one hideous welter.

"Told you so," said Oswald, calmly—nothing excited him—as Holland sprang up, sending the débris in all directions, and spluttering inarticulately with rage. "I wouldn't trust my brew to a home-made table. Here, let's pick up the pieces and adjourn to my study."

"Well," said Peel. He had escaped damage, and the way Holland's sin had found him out seemed decidedly humorous. "I don't think much of Maxwell's work this time. What a vile mess! It all comes of borrowing."

"Jolly bad habit," said Oswald, grinning. "Neither a borrower nor a——. Here, steady on!" he exclaimed, as Holland crashed past him, with murder in his eyes.

"I'll simply slay the young brute!" hissed Holland. "Here, Maxwell, Maxwell!"

It simply fell to pieces when I moved it."

"I say, do you mean to say it's smashed?" exclaimed Maxwell. "But I made it——"

"Oh, we all know you're a jolly fine carpenter," interrupted Holland. "Anyhow, it is smashed—take it away."

Crash! The legs of the table gave way, and everything upon it was deposited in a hideous mess into Holland's lap. "I'll simply slay the young brute!" he cried.

"Don't be an ass," said Peel. "If you will commandeer a home-made table, you can't grumble if it comes to bits."

In a few moments Maxwell appeared outside.

"Yes, Holland," he said. "Do you want me?"

"Yes; take your rotten table away," replied Holland, violently "Or what's left of it.

He watched, wishing he had the shadow of an excuse for reducing Maxwell to the same conditions as his table, as the unlucky craftsman sorted out the remains of his handiwork from the other débris. He was just about to go when Peel looked up from the floor where he was collecting biscuits.

"Oh, Maxwell," he said. "Oswald tells

me you played rippingly on lower to-day." Maxwell reddened, and the gloom on his face lightened a little.

"Well, we need a back on upper, and I'm going to try you. So play up and you'll get your colours, maybe."

Maxwell stood still, gazing at Peel, speechless. The prospects were beyond his fondest hopes, and at last, with an effort, he grunted out something that might have been thanks, an expression of good intentions, or possibly both. Then, as Holland showed signs of becoming restive at his continued presence, he retired, and went back to his study, where, to Reid's surprise, he executed a wild war dance. Words alone, he felt, were quite inadequate to express his general satisfaction with things.

III

In spite of his small stature, Maxwell justified the soundness of Oswald's judgment in his very first game, which it so happened was against the Elephant's house. That gentleman normally played forward, but it happened that he took a pass, and breaking through the scrum he got well away. He evaded the dilettante three-quarters without much difficulty, and made straight for the goal, with only the small back in his way.

It was a trying ordeal for Maxwell, but he proved equal to it. The huge man, with a smile at the small size of his opponent, did not try to run round him, but made straight for him, wondering whether he would stand up to him, and preparing to shove him off. But Maxwell was in no way impressed either by the Elephant's size or reputation. He tackled him without flinching, and wriggling under his arm got his arms well round him. Then, as was inevitable, he went down before Barry's feet, and the great man plunged helplessly over him, and one of the three-quarters, who had raced back, got the ball and kicked it back into touch.

"I say, Peel," said Barry at the end of the game, "that's a useful kid you've got at back. What's his name? Maxwell? I shall keep my eye on him."

After that there was no further doubt as to Maxwell's eligibility, and when Tenfield was drawn to play Goldings in the first ties, he was put down to play in the house team.

The technique of the game in those days would seem strange now. Scrums were long, savage, and enduring, and it was quite legitimate for a house that was weak behind to keep the ball among the forwards for practically the whole game. This was naturally Tenfield's game. Peel had trained them to it assiduously, and they did it very effectively.

Goldings, whose strength lay behind, did all they could to make a looser game, but with very little success. Tenfield had been too well drilled, and when they did succeed in getting away, the insignificant-looking back brought them down with most satisfactory precision.

It was not an exciting game to watch. Tenfield managed to keep Goldings from scoring, but they couldn't get the ball over the line themselves, and they came to within five minutes of time with love all.

Things were looking bad for Goldings. They had been shoved down to their twenty-five and kept there, and were getting angry. They were admittedly the stronger house, and yet they could do nothing. Then their captain, who was a half, had an inspiration. Tenfield had at last begun to try to get the ball out, and Goldings were holding it in, naturally, when he suddenly shouted to his men, and in a moment or two the ball came out by him. In a flash he had it and passed it, *towards goal*, to a three-quarter, shouting, "To Raguenel."

Now Raguenel was Goldings's back. He was little, if at all, taller than Maxwell, though three years older, but with the breadth of shoulders and depth of a very big man, and the strength of a gorilla. In reality he was a far more dangerous opponent than the Elephant, and he showed his quality then.

There was just one chance of getting through for him, which he took, and he went clean away, working up to the middle of the ground straight for the goal. It was the Elephant's charge over again, only more so. Fleet as he was, Raguenel knew that it was useless to try to run round Maxwell, and he went straight at him, trusting to his strength and long arms on a sudden swerve when he reached him. But Maxwell's blood was up, and he was ready for the swerve and wriggled past the long arm, as easily as he had got in under the Elephant's, and Raguenel went down handsomely, with the youngster under him, amid a shout of delight from Tenfield.

But Maxwell did not hear the shout. Raguenel had landed full on his left shoulder, and, as they fell, a sudden stab of pain ran through it, and when he made a dash for the ball, to his horror, he found that his left arm was useless, and instinctively he took hold of it to support it.

The situation was saved for the moment; before Raguenel could get to the ball Tenfield were back and had packed. But, as Maxwell went automatically back to his place, Goldings managed to heel out and Raguenel went away again, and Maxwell could only look on helplessly, while he ran through the posts and touched down.

"What are you doing, funking like that, Maxwell?" yelled Holland, though he had no business to do so. But Maxwell did not answer; he was trying very cautiously to touch his head with his left hand.

"Thought so," he said, wincing and supporting it again. "Peel, I'm awfully sorry, but my collar-bone broke when I collared Raguenel just now."

IV

"HULLO, building a house," said Oswald, entering the workshop, where Maxwell was awkwardly handling some large pieces of wood with one hand. "Let me help you." It was Maxwell's first day out, and being debarred any other form of employment, he was trying to carpenter, as well as he could, with one arm in a sling.

"Thanks very much," he said. "I've measured it, and if you'd hold it, I can saw it. It's going to be a toboggan."

"A toboggan," Oswald smiled. It was late in October, but sunny and warm.

"Know it looks mad," returned Maxwell, "but I must do something, and it'll be ready when it does snow. It usually does here, sooner or later."

"Oh, it's rather a sound notion, really," said Oswald. "I say, we've drawn Goldings again in house grounds."

House grounds—why so-called I never knew—were house matches played without caps; and Peel, having been knocked out of house matches, had spared no pains in working up the undecorated men in his house for this fresh competition.

"Then we ought to lick them," remarked Maxwell. "They've nine caps and we've only three. I wish I could play."

"You'll be right for the final, though, won't you?" said Oswald.

"I hope so, if we get in so far. Who's playing back now?"

"Noyes, extra three-quarter. But I doubt if he'll be in house ground. He'll get his Third XV. next lot."

"I suppose he will." Maxwell adjusted his saw to a fresh pencil-mark. "How many more do you think we shall get?" he added, as he set to work again.

"Four, I expect, at least, besides Noyes."

"I don't see how," replied Maxwell. "Besides Noyes, there are only Watson, Beeston, and Gordon who are any real good."

"What about yourself?" said Oswald.

Maxwell stopped sawing, and stared at him open-mouthed.

"Why not?" went on Oswald. "I know for a fact that Peel will put you up if he can."

"But, hang it all," exclaimed Maxwell. The bare possibility of this had never so much as entered his head. "I've only played half a dozen times on upper, and it'll be four weeks before I can play again. I shan't be able to run for a fortnight."

"Well, start training as soon as possible, and get as fit as you can," said Oswald. "And if you play at all decently, you'll be a cert for it. Don't tell anyone I said so, but it's a fact. I thought I'd let you know to buck you up a bit. It's beastly rough luck being crocked."

Peel's tactics proved eminently successful, and Tenfield pushed its way strenuously through three ties to the final. But their methods, though sure, were slow, and as a win could not be scored on one day's play by less than three goals, every match took two days, except the semi-finals, which occupied three, the first two being blank. Then a sharp frost and a little snow, though not enough to employ the now finished toboggan, caused a postponement of the finals just beyond the time limit set by the doctor for Maxwell, and after a careful examination, to his unspeakable joy, he was declared fit to play. By this time he was thoroughly fit again, having been training and practising kicking for over a fortnight.

He had not very much to do on the first day of the match; the forwards kept the ball in the scrum, as they had been trained to do, but what he had to do he did thoroughly, and nothing was scored at the end of the day. But towards the end of the second day a fast three-quarter got well away, on the lower side of the ground, and looked like getting in. Maxwell had been a little too far forward, and had to run his best to catch him. But catch him he did, fairly, and with the impetus of their pace they came down heavily and rolled down hill among the spectators.

Maxwell's shoulder was still tender, and the fall hurt it somewhat, and in much alarm he raised his arm. But he was able to touch

his head without difficulty, so he ran back to his place, much relieved, and the day finished with the score still at love-all and another afternoon's play to be gone through.

V

"I say, Peel!"

"Awri, 'm'wake."

Peel was Captain of the Red Dormitory, and Maxwell, who occupied the next cubicle, had the daily duty of waking him up, at a certain interval after the house bell. But this morning he did not seem satisfied with his chief's reply, and repeated his remark.

"Wassermatter? 'M'wake, tell you," replied Peel, testily.

"I say, my shoulder's bad again."

"What?" Peel really was awake now.

"It is," went on Maxwell, dolefully. "I can't lift my arm, and it hurts when I move it. I don't know how I'm to dress. I must have done it when I came a cropper on the touch-line. The ground was beastly hard."

"Oh, perhaps it's only stiff," said Peel, grasping at the hope. "Get someone to help you to dress, and see how it is after breakfast."

But things had not mended when Peel himself went to Maxwell's study after breakfast, to see how he was, as it needed no special knowledge of broken bones to discover.

"Oh, it's not very bad," said Maxwell, eagerly. "Let me play and say nothing about it. After all, I may not have anything to do, and it is the last game. Once it's over, it doesn't matter if I am smashed up."

Peel was sorely tempted. There was just the off chance that Maxwell would have nothing to do that he could not manage, half crippled though he was. On the other hand, there was the very real chance of his getting badly damaged, and Peel was old enough to have acquired a sense of responsibility in his men, beyond the mere duty of making them play up and behave themselves.

"It can't be done," he said at last, shaking his head. "You must see the doctor."

"Really, it isn't so bad," pleaded Maxwell, raising his arm and dropping it quickly with a grimace of pain, at which Peel grinned.

"No, not a bit," he said. "I'm awfully sorry, old man, but I'm afraid it's no go."

It was not. Colours and cap were gone beyond recall for some other less easily damaged individual. With rage and bitterness in his heart, and his arm in a sling, he had to watch the final played, with the unutterable misery of seeing his house play with an extra three-quarter and lose by a try to nil, thanks to a run which he could have stopped in his sleep.

Then the snow came down again, thick and clean, for two days on end, and once more his damage cut him off from any enjoyment, so he lent his toboggan to Reid. It was a simple affair, a platform to hold two, curling up in front on two long wooden runners, shod with strips of smooth iron. But these gave it a tremendous advantage, for practically all the other toboggans used by the school ran on wood; and Reid and Duggan found it eminently satisfactory, and, hearing that some races were contemplated, decided to enter for the junior event.

But someone else had similar views on the subject, and when they arrived at the hill on the second afternoon, they were accosted, as they finished their first-run, by Holland, in sweater and breeches.

"Hullo, what are you doing with that toboggan?" he said, in his coldest corridor captain voice.

"It's Maxwell's," said Reid, apprehensively.

"I know it is; what do you mean by taking it? You didn't ask him if you might."

"He lent it to us."

"Not to-day. He's lent it to me, and you have the cheek to go off with it. I've a jolly good mind to lick you both. Well, you can stop here to take it back when I've done with it."

As soon as they had housed it, when Holland had quite done with it, they rushed off to Maxwell with news of the outrage.

"I know all about that," said Maxwell, placidly, though the danger signal was out in his eyes and on his mouth. "He came in just before you did, and told me that as I couldn't use it I was to lend it to him. There's going to be a race to-morrow, for which he's entered."

"I know, we were going in for the junior one," said Reid, dolefully.

"Well, you'll have better sport than that," said Maxwell. "He's forgotten the table, I can see—I must remind him of it."

"What do you mean? You can't," said Duggan.

"Not in so many words, perhaps," replied Maxwell, grinning happily. "Reid, lug the toboggan round to the workshop; I want to see if it's damaged, like my table. His high mightiness is not very careful of things he borrows."

Holland was in high feather over the proposed race. It was for single competitors,

but Maxwell's toboggan, in spite of being double, ran and steered so easily, that he felt he had more than a good chance of winning. He was also a steward of the competition, and he arrived early in correct St. Moritz get up, as nearly as he could manage it, and walked up the hill, with other great men, before a cringing, admiring audience of small boys. He had meant to have a trial run, just to show everyone how the thing should be done, for, as a matter of fact, he knew more about the sport than most boys at the college. But to his annoyance, Reid did not arrive with his toboggan till after the junior competition had begun, though when he did Holland had forgotten his anger and promised revenge in his delight of attending to the small boys.

They were not very skilful, and he did not refrain from letting them know it. The track was straight, though rather bumpy, and on its left was a long hollow, half its length, full of drifted snow, into which more than half of them found their way, to the delight of the spectators.

This Holland found a more than adequate theme for humour.

"Come on," he said in gallery tones to a nervous junior, as he brought his toboggan to the post. "The man from St. Moritz. Don't forget it's a race, not a snow-bath."

And the junior, after a wobbly start, in his efforts to avoid the fatal snow-bath, put his helm over too hard and did a section of his course on his back.

"That's Engadine style, not St. Moritz," commented Holland. "Who's the next snow-plough?"

He enjoyed himself immensely, and the crowd tittered dutifully at his jokes, till the senior competition began. This time he made no jokes, but the seniors were not very much better than the juniors, and he enjoyed himself equally in his anticipation of his own performance, for he really understood the game.

At last his turn came.

"Don't shove me off too hard, Barry," he said to the Elephant, who was starting. "She runs very easily. Yes, I'm ready."

His toboggan started slowly, but rapidly gathered speed. But speed was not her only accomplishment, for before she had gone ten yards she swung round on a course to the left, and Holland took the snow-bath in unimpeachable style.

Holland started off at a terrific pace. Then the toboggan swerved to the left at top speed, and he was shot from his seat to land head-first in the drift, amid a howl of delighted cheers.

"Is that St. Moritz or Engadine style?" queried Oswald, who was looking on with Peel, when the shouts of laughter had subsided.

"No. Dutch, of course," said the Elephant, with a grin. "Bound to be with Holland. Come on, old son, you're as big a rotter as the rest of us, so keep smiling. You've two more tries."

Holland was smiling very sourly, for he was very angry indeed, the more so as he could not understand the toboggan's failure to steer. However, he tried not to show it, and this time took great care to keep well clear of the fatal hollow. But there was no humouring her. She ran very unkindly for a few yards, and then the vigour of Holland's right-hand work made her slew round, and he rolled into the banked-up snow that side.

"Who's a snow-plough now?" said the Elephant, unkindly, as he returned. "You've been into each side; you ought to hit the middle this time."

"I can't make it out," said Holland, impatiently. "She went beautifully yesterday. Give me a good straight shove off, Barry."

Barry did so, and Holland shot off at a terrific pace. For a few yards, by strenuous efforts, he just succeeded in keeping his machine straight. Then a bump put him off for a moment, and the toboggan took prompt advantage of it. Round to the left she swerved in a beautiful curve at top speed, with Holland leaning over to the right, with an agonised look on his face, as he tried to save her. But it was too late, and just at the edge of the hollow centrifugal force triumphed, and Holland shot from his seat and landed head-first in the drift, amid a perfect howl of delighted cheers.

At last he lost his temper.

"That little brute Reid's been playing the fool with her," he exclaimed as he came back. "She ran perfectly straight before. I'll simply slay him!"

"Oh, come off the roof," said the Elephant. "It's your own rotten bad steering. What could he do? I say!" he added, looking at his watch, "I've just remembered that I called a football committee at 3.30. You might shove off for me, Holland. Come on, Peel."

The football committee consisted of the nine house captains, who, among other duties, settled promotions to Second and Third XV. caps; and Holland was slightly cheered at the news, for he hoped to put the Second's tassel on to his bare cap. He had not got it yet, and Oswald had, over his head, which rankled. But he was noticeably quiet throughout the rest of the competition, and when it was over he avoided his friends and went straight back to house to the shed in which bicycles, and, in their season, toboggans were housed.

He came out white with rage, and shouted angrily for Maxwell, but there was no reply, and a careful search failed to find him. But towards lock-up time, 5.30, he lay in wait for him and caught him just as he came in.

"Oh, you're back at last," he said venomously. "Come up to my study. Now, what do you mean by fooling with that toboggan?"

"I don't understand," said Maxwell, stolidly. "Have you broken it, too?"

Holland made a grab at him, but Maxwell stepped back quickly.

"Look out for my shoulder," he said. "The old break has parted a little again."

"That won't save you," snarled Holland, though in ordinary decency he had to refrain. "You know jolly well what I mean. The toboggan ran perfectly yesterday, but wouldn't go a yard straight to-day. You've done something to it."

"Well, it's my toboggan, isn't it?"

Holland stood aghast. There was not a trace of the deference due to a great man from a nobody in his tones, which were unrestrainedly defiant. He seemed about to rush at him again, but just restrained himself in time. Instead he took his cane up.

"What's that for," said Maxwell, undismayed.

"Outrageous cheek," returned Holland. "Now then, out in the passage."

But Maxwell shook his head and did not move. "I won't take it," he said.

If a bombshell had burst in the passage, Holland would not have been more surprised, but almost immediately he recovered, and saw his way to a far more humiliating vengeance. Refusing to take a judicial licking, even merely for cheek, had a very painful corollary as a rule.

"Oh, won't you? Good, the very man!" he exclaimed, as Peel and Oswald appeared, just at closing time. "Peel," he went on, in his most official head voice, "Maxwell refuses to take a turning-up for the grossest, most barefaced cheek I ever came across."

"Oh, what was it about?" said Peel, without very much excitement.

"Oh—er—just in general," replied Holland, uncomfortably. He did not care to go into details.

"And he lent you his toboggan, too," commented Oswald. "Was that the cheek?"

Maxwell grinned without restraint.

"Well, wait a minute," said Peel, pinning two papers on the house notice-board close by. "Just look at these first."

One was the promotions to the last places in the House Fifteen, and among them Holland

saw "A. Maxwell." With an exclamation of disgust he turned to the others, which was the list of caps given at the committee meeting. Then he swore vigorously and at some length, but under his breath. The coveted tassel had not come his way. He was still only Third, but Noyes had got it, and followed Oswald over his head. But to crown all, half-way up the list of Thirds was "A. Maxwell" again.

"I think it was only fair, don't you?" said Peel, amiably. "If only as compensation for his bad luck. He played thundering well when he did play, and we'd have won house grounds and gone a lot further in house matches if he hadn't been crocked. It was the Elephant's idea too. So, you see, he was quite right not to take a turning-up for cheek. He knew about this."

There was no denying this. By all most sacred customs Maxwell was now Holland's equal in all things socially.

"Then why couldn't he have told me so?" said Holland, taking a stand as a firm upholder of legality. "I shouldn't have said anything if he had."

"Modesty, no doubt," said Oswald. "But now, Maxwell, do not let modesty prevent you from telling us the joke."

"Well," said Maxwell, solemnly, "I like making experiments, and I wanted to see if I could make my toboggan travel on a curve. So I set the iron runners at a slight angle to the line of the machine last night, and planed up the right wooden runner in front, so that it would bear less hard on the ground and so have a tendency to travel faster than the other side. I couldn't try it myself, so I lent it to Holland, and he did it for me."

For a moment Holland gazed at the speaker, looking as if he must burst. Then, just as Peel and Oswald burst into shouts of laughter, he swung round on his heel into his study.

"I told you you'd be sold a pup," shouted Oswald after him, as he slammed the door. "In the neck all right. I say, Maxwell, I've often wondered if the table incident was quite accidental?"

"Not much; neither was the stoppage of Duggan's clock." This timepiece had unaccountably refused to go, except in its owner's study. "I took all the screws out of the table, except four, when I was painting it, and made those loose. Then, when you were playing that day, after lower game was over, while the other chaps were changing, I took them out and filled the holes with green putty. It was only held together by gum and stamp-paper, and to make it sure to smash, I hitched a strand from the carpet round two of its legs. I don't believe in lending."

"Maxwell," said Oswald, when he was able to for laughing, "you will either become a great man or a successful criminal. You're too clever for this ordinary common or garden life."

"It serves Holland jolly well right," said Peel, treating Maxwell instinctively as an equal. "But, oh, my son, it was very, very lucky for you that the Elephant backed me up over your cap, otherwise—whew!"

"Maybe," said Maxwell, placidly. "But I should have got my own back, sooner or later, all the same. I generally do."

"You young devil! I believe you would have," exclaimed Peel. "Well, we've an hour ahead of us; Oswald and I are going to brew; come along up. I say, if Holland was the just man he ought to be, he'd be jolly grateful to you. I don't think he'll do much more borrowing."

And Holland did not.

BRIDGES BUILT BY NATURE

Among the many curious bridges in the world may be mentioned those which Nature builds herself by the growth of vegetation. In California there is a stream that flows through a narrow gorge lined with forest trees, and the branches of these trees lean over the gorge in such a way that one can climb from one side of the gorge to the other by means of them. Some readers may recall that a bridge of this description is made use of in a Californian tale by Bret Harte. In tropical countries bridges of vines are often met with. In Central Peru a large river is spanned by a bridge, the flooring of which consists of tree branches bound together by vines, while other vines are used to make a safe hand-rail. And the vines are not dead, but full of life, and grow out of the ground on either side of the river, being frequently covered with leaves.

VARIETIES OF THE "COURIER" STAMPS OF MOROCCO

THE "political settlement" of Morocco—in other words, the cutting up between France and Spain of that once mighty empire—will probably mean the inauguration of a regular postal system, inland as well as external. Hitherto there has been no national postal service, and consequently no national postage stamps. The country has had to look to the "foreign post offices" established at the principal Moroccan cities by Britain, France, Germany, and Spain for both postage stamps and postal facilities. Thus under "Morocco" in our albums and catalogues we have only the stamps of other nations surcharged for use in the sultanate.

Between the years 1891 and 1900, however, there were numerous issues of local "courier" stamps for the prepayment of letters to be carried over certain defined routes, such as Tangier to Fez, Mogador to Morocco City, Fez to Mesquinez, etc., etc. Philatelically these issues have long been "under a cloud," for it cannot be denied that in certain cases they were issued rather for sale to collectors than for *bona fide* postal purposes. Yet, with all their faults, the stamps will probably enjoy renewed attention now that a settled government for Morocco is within sight. The completion of my own collection of the "courier" stamps—if a stamp collection can ever be called complete—will enable me to supplement the very meagre information to be found in the catalogues.

There is a good deal of go-as-you-please about the spelling of Moroccan names. Thus "Tangier" is "Tanger" on some of these labels, "Tangier" on others; while "Morocco" is rendered "Maroc," "Marakech," or "Marakesch." My better plan, therefore, in offering you the following brief guide to the principal varieties will be to adhere to the route-names as given on the various stamps, and to take the different services alphabetically.

Alcazar - Ouazzan.—Issue of 1896. Design, native on camel-back. Seven values, 5 centimes to 1 franc.

These stamps bear the date "1896" as part of the printed design. They are also inscribed "service postal bi-hebdomodaire," so that a fairly frequent dispatch of mails was promised by this particular route. The perforation is 11½. All the "used" specimens I have seen have the appearance of being postmarked to order.

Fez - Mequinez.—Issue of 1896. Design, a Moor's head. Eight values, 5 centimes to 1 franc. There were also issued in 1898 eight "unpaid letter" stamps (5 centimes to 1 franc) inscribed "Chiffre Taxe."

Two varieties of perforation are found here, 11½ and 14. Imperforate specimens exist, and also "pairs imperf. between." Genuine used specimens are scarce, but there are plenty of the postmarked-to-order variety, generally with a very spick-and-span cancellation reading "Fez Maroc," and dated February or March, 1897.

There is good ground for believing the Fez-Mequinez to have been a quite genuine service at the outset, as the stamps were on sale at the British Postal Agency at Fez, where also letters for the courier post were taken in. One cannot, however, vouch for the *bona fides* of the "unpaid letter" stamps, which, by the way, do not bear the full name of the route, but only have the initial letters "F.M." in the upper corners.

Fez-Sefro.—Issue of 1894. Values, in Spanish, 5 centimos to 1 peseta. Design, a high tower—possibly intended to typify the lofty ambition of the German clerk who is reported to have been the sole proprietor of this imaginary "postal service." The Fez-Sefro labels are included here solely for the sake of completeness. They are undoubtedly frauds, and have long since disappeared from the catalogues.

Mazagan-Azemour-Marakech.—Issue of 1898. Design, a Moorish mosque, palm trees, etc. Seven values, 5 centimos to 1 peseta.

These large oblong stamps are clearly inscribed "Correos," otherwise we might mistake them for advertisement labels. The value in each case is printed in black and the rest of the stamp in colour. Perforated 11.

Mazagan-Maroc.—Issue of 1891. Design, large numerals "25" with the surrounding inscription "Service de Courriers: Mazagan a Maroc." One value, 25 centimes red, which

was surcharged "10 cents" to provide a second stamp of that value.

We have here one of the earliest and most genuine of the Moroccan "courier" issues. There are both black and blue printings of the "10 cents" surcharge, the blue being by far the scarcer. Perforated 11.

Mazagan-Marakech.—Issue of 1893. Design, palm tree and rising sun. Six values, 5 centimos to 1 peseta. There was also a provisional stamp created by overprinting "20 centimos" upon the 5 centimos value.

This also is one of the genuine issues, and some interesting varieties are to be noted. The stamps exist both on white and tinted papers, while some are on paper only partially tinted.

There is a uniform perforation of 10. Many minor varieties are to be ascribed to the method of printing—lithography.

The issue of 1900 bearing the same name, "Mazagan-Marakech," is probably quite a separate concern. The design shows a mounted Moor hunting, and there are seven values ranging from 5 centimos to 1 peseta. The perforation is 11½. We may judge that this series is of French origin from the Gallic cock depicted in the small upper circles of the design.

Mazagan-Marakesh (mark the difference of spelling!).—Issue of 1897. Design, a native view. Six values, 5 centesimi to 1 peseta.

These stamps were lithographed in London by Messrs. Waterlow Bros. & Layton, and the work is so good that it might easily pass for engraving at first glance. There is an extraordinary confusion of currency here, the lower values being priced in Italian "centisimi," while the highest is of the value of a Spanish "peseta"!

Mogador-Agadir.—Issue of 1900. Design, lion and flag, with sun rising in the background. Seven values, 5 centimos to 1 peseta.

Here are stamps bearing the name "Agadir," a name which brought two great nations almost to the verge of war. As if gifted with prophetic vision the designer of these stamps adorned them with a typical British lion defending a flag, the said flag being coloured red on every stamp of the series. The perforation is 14; and such postmarks as I have seen on these labels appear to be "accommodation" cancellations.

Mogador-Maroc.—Issue of 1892. Design, large numerals "20." One value, 20c. red.

This is a stamp bearing a close family likeness to the "Mazagan-Maroc" stamp of 1891, and I should say the two issues had a common origin. Perforated 11. Genuine used specimens exist.

Mogador-Marakesch.—Issue of 1895. Design, Moorish buildings, with mountains in background. Five values, 5 centimos to 1 peseta. Also there were two surcharged provisionals, 10c. on 15c. black overprint; and 10c. on 15c. violet overprint.

These stamps were lithographed by a German firm. They show many variations of colour. Perforated 13.

Issue of 1898 (?). Design, a native walking with staff; Moorish inscriptions at head and foot of stamp. Six values, 5 centimos to 1 peseta.

Of these much more finely lithographed stamps I have been unable to glean any definite information. There is no mention of them in the catalogues; but I have cancelled specimens,

apparently genuinely used. The 10 centimos carmine was at some time or other given a diagonal overprint "5 centavos."

Saffi-Marakech.—Issue of 1899. Design, a view of the sea, with ship and boat. Seven values, 5 centimos to 1 peseta. Perforated 11½. A doubtful series.

Tanger-Arzila.—Issue of 1895. Design, crossed triangles, with the inscription above, "Servicio de Correos Marruecos." Eight values, 5 centimos to 3 pesetas.

I have specimens bearing apparently genuine postmarks of various dates. The perforation is 13, and there are varieties imperf. or partly imperf.

Tanger-El-Ksar.—Issue of 1898. Design, a ship. Eight values, 5 centimos to 2 pesetas. Roughly lithographed stamps, perforated 11. A dubious issue.

Tanger-Fez.—Issue of 1892. Design, a palm tree. Six values, 5 centimes to 5 francs—the latter being the highest denomination of any Moroccan courier stamp.

Here we have another of the genuine courier posts. Specimens are found both with the French P.O. cancellation and the postmark of the courier service. Several varieties of paper exist, such as thin medium wove, and also a much thicker paper with a toned surface. Perforated 11½ and 13½.

Tanger-Laraiche.—Issue of 1898. Design, a native woman. Six values, 5 centimos to 1 peseta. Perforated 11½. A somewhat doubtful series.

Tangier-Tetouan.—Issue of 1897. Design, sleeping lion and palm tree; no name indicated. Five values, 5 to 25 centimos. Quaint little labels of, I believe, a genuine post.

Tetouan-Cheechouan.—Issue of 1896 (dated). Design, a ship within a star. Seven values, 5 centimes to 1 franc. These were very extensively postmarked to order. Perforated 11½.

Tetouan-El-Ksar.—Issue of 1897. Design, a horseman. Seven values, 5 centimos to 2 pesetas. Perforation 11½. Another rather dubious set.

Thus there are close upon 130 distinct varieties of the Moroccan "courier" postage stamps, some of which are now very much scarcer than their catalogue prices would lead one to suppose.

COLLECTORS IN COUNCIL

WHAT ARE "IVORY HEADS"?

"I can find no explanation in any handbook I possess of what is meant by an 'Ivory Head' in relation to British stamps. Will you please enlighten me?"—*C. G. B., Kensington.*

Certainly. The term "Ivory Head" is a nickname given to certain varieties of the early line-engraved stamps of Great Britain which show on their reverse (or gummed) side the shape of the Queen's head in white, the remainder of the space being bluish. The explanation is simple enough. The tendency of the inks employed for our early stamps was to give the paper a bluish tinge, and naturally this would be more or less pronounced according to the quantity of ink applied. Very little ink being used for the actual head of the Queen, the result in many cases is an "ivory head" on the reverse side of the stamp.

VARIETIES OF THE 1C. AND 2C. OF CUBA

"Not being quite able to make out the differences of the two types of the 1 cent

Type I

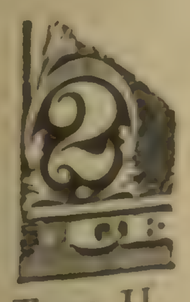
Type II

(Columbus) and 2 cents (palms) stamps of Cuba, might I suggest you explain these in THE CAPTAIN?—*S. E. K., Halifax.*

To show these differences as clearly as possible I give magnified illustrations of a portion of the stamp—in each case the lower left corner showing the numeral of value.

In the case of the 1 cent stamp, compare the immediate surroundings of the numeral "1" in these illustrations, and especially the oval frame of pearls around the numeral. In the first type these pearls are small and are

Type I



Type II

clearly separated from one another; in the second type the pearls are larger and set close together. In the enlarged drawings the difference is perceived at a glance, but in going through the actual stamps for types a good glass is a necessary aid to rapid classification.

In the 2 cents stamp we must again study the framing of the numeral of value. In Type I. the figure "2" is placed upon a plain oval groundwork of solid colour (except for the white dot under the "2"); but in Type II. ornaments are introduced to left and right of the numeral. Another point of difference is in the shading being far heavier in Type I. than in Type II.

THREE CLASSES OF INDIAN STAMPS

"I see references to 'Indian native states' and 'Indian convention states' stamps. What is a convention state in India?"—*W. S. J., Morecambe.*

To answer this satisfactorily I must explain that there are three classes, or grades, of postage stamps in use in India, as follows:—

(1) Imperial Indian postage stamps bearing the head of the King-Emperor. These are good for postage throughout India and to any portion of the outside world.

(2) Convention states' stamps—that is, Imperial Indian stamps with a special overprint of the name of a particular state, such as Puttialla, Gwalior, Nabha, etc. The "convention" states are those that have entered into a compact to recognise each other's postage stamps, which are therefore available for postage throughout the "convention" states, but will not frank mail matter for any place outside.

(3) Native states' stamps. These are purely local stamps issued by the separate post offices of the "native" or feudatory states of India. They are available for postage only within the borders of the state in which they are issued.

DIES I. AND II. OF THE "PENNY RED"

"Would you advise me of the best test for distinguishing between Die I. and Die II. of the 1*d.* red, Great Britain, 1854-57?"—*E. N. F., Lyme Regis.*

Die II., as it is always called, is a re-engraving of the original die, by means of which various little weaknesses of the design were rectified. The slightly enlarged reproductions given here

Die I Die II

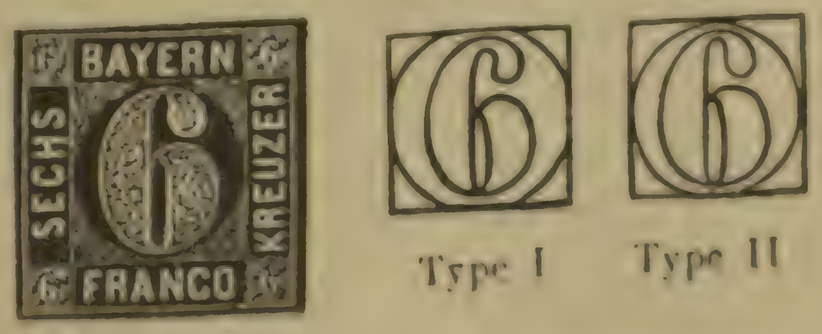
will serve to show the more marked differences. Take first the Queen's eyelid—a favourite test. In Die I. the eyelid is practically devoid of shading; in Die II. it is quite heavily shaded. Other notable differences are to be found in the shape of the nostril and in the set of the lips; but perhaps the second best test is to be found in the band around the hair just behind the Queen's ear. This band in Die I. is vague and ill-defined; in Die II. it is quite clear and sharp. By memorising one or more of these points the collector can very readily distinguish between Dies I. and II. In this, as in most things, "practice makes perfect."

ABOUT THE BRITISH PHILATELIC CONGRESS

"I should like to know a little more about the annual congress of philatelists. Are all stamp collectors entitled to bring their views and opinions before the congress, and, if so how does one go about it?"—*N. J. B., Todmorden.*

As the time for the Fourth Annual Congress of Philatelists is approaching, an answer to this question will interest many Captainites.

The congress is, in a sense, the philatelists' parliament. Delegates are chosen to represent



Type I Type II

the various philatelic societies, and are either allowed a free hand to speak and vote as they think best in the interests of their fellow-members, or are given special instructions based upon the views and wishes of the society to which they belong.

If "N. J. B.," or any other CAPTAIN reader has anything to suggest for discussion at the fourth congress to be held at Margate in May next, I shall be very pleased to hear of it, and, as a delegate for the Society of Stamp Collectors, to bring the matter forward at the proper time, if deemed suitable.

THE "BROKEN CIRCLE" OF BAVARIA

"Is the enclosed 6 kreuzer Bavaria the variety known as the 'broken circle,' and if so, what is the selling value of this stamp?"—*H. W. S., London Fields.*

The specimen sent by the above-mentioned reader, and since returned to him, is not the broken-circle variety; and as others may be in doubt about this stamp perhaps it will be well to give a clearer description than that provided in the catalogues. In the first Bavarian stamp of 6 kreuzer the central circle containing the "6" is cut into, or broken, by the frame lines as shown in my first diagram (Type I.), but in the following year the stamp was re-issued with the central circle complete (Type II.).

The stamp with circle broken is infinitely rarer than that with circle complete, especially in unused condition. Here are the latest catalogue quotations: Broken circle variety, unused £25, used 4*s.*; complete circle, unused, 1*s.* to 4*s.*, according to shade; used, 2*d.* to 6*d.* Thus, you see, the 6 kreuzer "broken circle" is a thing to keep one's eyes open for.

The Tiger of Batol

A Story of Peril and Adventure in the China Seas.

By Capt. Richard Benson.

Synopsis

Austin Chesney and Clive Denham, two old friends, meet in Plymouth, where they are enabled to render a signal service to Captain Heritage, who has a bag of pearls stolen from him by a Malay. The two boys, after an exciting chase, capture the thief, Kwala, and restore the pearls to Captain Heritage, who is exceedingly grateful.

The three encounter Terence O'Rourke, who has served before under Captain Heritage. The captain then tells them that he is about to set out on a great adventure, and invites them all to accompany him. He has fitted out the schooner *Brilliant* for a voyage to Sunshine Island, which he has leased from the Japanese Government for two years, and where he has good reason to believe there is a pearl lagoon of enormous value.

Terence O'Rourke and the boys willingly join the expedition, and the *Brilliant* reaches its destination. Near Sunshine Island a burly castaway is picked up, and Kwala, the Malay, also makes a reappearance. These two suddenly disappear, and the pearl-seekers learn that they have made their quarters on an apparently inaccessible island, named Batol. Stark, the castaway, is a pirate, and Captain Heritage frustrates an attempt on his part to capture a Japanese Government vessel. He learns that Stark (or Burnett, as he also calls himself) contemplates a raid on Sunshine Island.

CHAPTER XIII

KUSIMA DRIVES A HARD BARGAIN

"FAITH, we'd ought to have gone afther the spalpeen, and sunk him," growled O'Rourke.

"It was impossible," said the Japanese. "Crippled as you were by the loss of your topmast, you could not have caught him. But I feel sure that you inspired him with a wholesome respect for your fighting qualities." And Mr. Kusima showed his even, white teeth in a pleasant smile.

"You will accept our hospitality for the night, Mr. Kusima," said Heritage. "Our quarters are rough, but we can give you a bed."

Kusima thanked him cordially.

"It will be pleasant to spend a night on firm ground," he said. "Besides, it will give me an opportunity to talk over with you the business which has been entrusted to me by my Government."

The words, polite as they were, were like a cold douche to his English hearers.

To Heritage especially. He had felt uncomfortably certain that the amazing value of his concession would leak out, and that sooner or later the Japanese Government would come down upon him for its pound of flesh.

But his voice betrayed nothing of his feeling as he assured Kusima of his delight in having an opportunity for a conversation.

He took Kusima into his own quarters, gave him refreshments and cigarettes, and, leaving the rest of the Japanese to the care of O'Rourke

and the boys, sat down to hear what his visitor had to say.

The latter first presented credentials which proved him to be without doubt an envoy from his Government, and entitled to receive the first year's rent of the lagoon.

"May I be permitted to hope that you are doing well?" said Kusima. "I notice that you have collected a large quantity of exceptionally fine shell."

"Shell is plentiful," replied Heritage, quietly. "More so than pearls, although I have at present no reason to complain on that score."

"I am requested to give you notice, captain, that at the end of your lease my Government intend to take over the island and lagoon," said Kusima. "It was thought fair to give you ample notice."

The words gave Heritage an ugly shock. He had hardly expected this. Work as he might, it would be flatly impossible to gather even the half of the great sum which he required for the purchase of the battleship within the next year.

But his voice was quite under control as he replied:—

"I was given to understand that there would be no difficulty about the renewal of the lease on the same terms as before."

Kusima shrugged his shoulders.

"I am sorry," he said. "That is, however, the message I have to give. Let me see—that gives you until the end of April next."

"Pardon me," said Heritage, quickly. "The end of June."

Kusima glanced at a paper which he drew from his pocket.

"You are wrong, captain—April is the date. I have it here from our own archives."

"But my agreement says June!" returned Heritage, sharply, and getting up he unlocked an iron deed-box, and showed his visitor the draft.

Kusima glanced through it.

"A mistake of the translator, I fear," he said, suavely.

Heritage suppressed a groan. He knew that it was not of the slightest use to argue. It would be mere waste of breath. The Japanese is the Yankee of the Pacific, and notorious for his sharp dealing.

It amounted to this: He had only ten months' working time left, and as that included the typhoon season it was probably not really more than eight. So far from getting the million which he needed, he would be lucky if he succeeded in acquiring pearls of the value of half that sum.

"I should be willing to pay an increased rent for a renewal of the concession," he said after a short pause.

"And I should be glad to oblige you if it were in my power," replied Kusima. "I am greatly in your debt."

Heritage glanced sharply at his visitor. The words sounded genuine enough, and he believed that the man really meant what he said.

"Is there any possible way of arranging it?" he asked, quietly.

The other hesitated.

"There is just one chance," he said, thoughtfully. "But I fear it is one which is quite outside the possibility of your acceptance."

"At any rate let me hear it."

"This man Stark is giving us very serious trouble," said Kusima.

For the moment Heritage did not see what bearing this remark had upon the subject which they were discussing.

"We have made several attempts to capture him already," went on Kusima, "but he absolutely defies us. Batol is practically impregnable. The heaviest guns have no effect upon its great cliffs, and landing is, of course, impossible. He is inflicting great harm upon our trade, and has already cost us much money and many lives."

Light suddenly flashed upon Heritage.

"You mean that the capture of Stark would be accepted by your Government as the price of a renewal of my lease?" he said, sharply.

"I think that I might safely promise that," said the Japanese.

"You would give it me in writing?"

"Yes."

"Will you permit me a short consultation with my friends? You will understand that this is a serious matter, and one which I cannot decide upon without their consent."

"By all means," answered Kusima.

Heritage left him and went into the mess-room, where the others were gathered talking eagerly together.

At sight of their chief's troubled face silence fell in the room. Every eye was fixed upon Heritage. They all felt instinctively that he had something of great importance to tell them.

In a few brief words he related his conversation with the Japanese envoy, and the latter's astonishing proposal.

The others listened in silence.

"Begor, he's got a foine cheek!" said

O'Rourke, when Heritage had finished. "The spalpeen wants us to take on a job which is too big for his whole counthry."

"It's a pretty large order, I admit," said Heritage, with a grim smile.

"Sure ye'd need your Dreadnought to tackle Batol," continued O'Rourke, thoughtfully. "I'm wid ye, captain, to the last kick, but I'm thinking we'd be biting off more than we could chew if we tuk on this pirate king in his native mountain."

"We might possibly manage to catch him at sea," suggested Austin.

"True," said Pagan. "But even then we'd only get a part of the gang. It seems to me that what the Japs want is for us to clear out Batol itself."

Heritage nodded.

"You are right, Pagan. It is Batol or nothing."

Pagan shook his great head.

"Like O'Rourke, I'm game to follow you anywhere, captain. But I own I don't see any way of managing this job. We should only throw away our lives for nothing."

A slight shade crossed Heritage's grave face.

"Very well, gentlemen," he said, in his quietest manner. "I have no doubt you are right. I told Mr. Kusima that the decision would be with you."

He was turning to leave the room when suddenly Clive, who up to now had not opened his mouth, spoke up sharply.

"There's one way we haven't yet thought of."

Heritage stopped short. The others all turned and looked at the boy.

Clive flushed a little, but went on.

"We can't tackle Batol from the sea, but we might from the air."

"From the air?" repeated Heritage.

"Yes, sir. By means of an aeroplane."

"Begor, I niver thought of that," exclaimed O'Rourke, and a buzz of eager talk burst out.

Heritage held up his hand for silence.

"I don't quite understand, Denham. An aeroplane might, of course, reach the summit of Batol; but such a machine carries one or at most two men. What use would they be against the forces under Stark's command?"

"Well, sir," said Clive, hesitatingly. "Even if there was only one man he could carry enough high explosives to smash everything on top of a small place like that into flinders. If the pirates haven't got caves or bomb-proof shelters he could fly round and round and wipe out every mother's son of them."

"Bedad, so he could!" exclaimed O'Rourke, slapping his knee with a sound like the report of a pistol.

"There's another thing to be considered," went on Clive, gaining confidence. "Most of these Black Flag chaps are Chinese—about the most ignorant and superstitious crowd in existence. It's my idea that the very sight of an aeroplane would scare them out of their wits."

"'Deed, the lad's right," declared the irrepressible O'Rourke. "They'd think 'twas a fiery dhragon come to take thim all to the bad place."

Heritage nodded.

"The moral effect is certainly to be considered," he said. "And Denham's idea may possibly be feasible. But granted that we could obtain the necessary machine and the explosives, where are we going to find an aeronaut who will risk his life in such a desperate enterprise?"

"I can fly, sir," said Clive, simply. "I was out almost every fine day last summer in my father's new machine."

"I beg your pardon, Denham," said Heritage. "I had quite forgotten that you were a flying man. And would you take this risk?"

"Of course I would, sir," said Clive, opening his eyes in surprise.

O'Rourke clapped his big hands.

"'Tis the broth of a boy, ye are, Misther Denham."

Clive coloured again.

"Nonsense, Mr. O'Rourke, there's no risk to speak of. Flying over the sea is always easier than over the land, and once I'm well up there's precious little danger. An aeroplane takes a lot of hitting, and I could simply choose my own height, and sail round and round, dropping bombs till not a single pirate would dare to show his nose. Then, if the schooner was lying by, her boats could land a good strong force, and as there'd be no opposition they could certainly find the way up the cliffs, and soon polish off the whole gang."

While Clive was speaking Heritage had listened with deep attention.

"Denham," he said. "I am very deeply indebted to you for your suggestion. And if the rest of you agree I shall at any rate try your plan."

"Sure, 'twas only a plan we wanted, sorr," declared O'Rourke. "Now we've got wan, I'm game to work it wid any man."

"And so am I," said Pagan.

Heritage looked as though a great weight had been lifted from his mind.

"That's settled then. The next question is how to obtain the aeroplane?"

"There's an uncle of mine in charge of our works, sir," said Clive. "If I cabled him the necessary credit he would see that the machine which my father was working at before his death was completed and sent out at once. I'd rather have that than any other, because I know exactly how to manage it."

"How long would that take?" asked Heritage.

"Say a fortnight to finish, and a month by steamer to Hong Kong. We should have it here within eight or nine weeks."

Heritage nodded.

"That would suit very well, for it would be no use trying to use it until the typhoon season is over. I propose then, gentlemen, that as soon as the shell can be loaded aboard the *Brilliant* she should sail for Hong Kong. Denham and I will go in her, and we will send the necessary cables as soon as we reach Hong Kong. O'Rourke and Pagan will remain here in charge, O'Rourke looking after the defences, and Pagan the fishing."

"Go ahead, sorr," said the big Irishman, energetically. "We'll kape this end up."

CHAPTER XIV

STARK SHOWS HIS HAND

"'TIS pretty nigh time for the boss to be getting back," observed O'Rourke, as he sat in the stern of the diving scow, and steadily turned the wheel of the pump.

The scow lay about half-way between the island and the reef, and one of the men was below, busily engaged in collecting the precious shell.

Austin, who was mending some fishing tackle, glanced up at the sky. It was covered with a thin haze which lay like a fog on the sea beyond the reef, and through which the sun burnt down with a coppery glare.

"If he's coming I hope he's not far off," he answered. "I don't like the look of the weather, and the glass was tumbling in a very ugly way when I looked at it this morning."

"Aye, lad, there's wind brewing, and I'd not wondher if 'twas a typhoon, though sure 'tis a bit late in the sayson for thim kind of storms."

"We've been jolly lucky so far," said Austin. "We haven't had a real bad blow yet, and only lost about a dozen days through bad weather the whole time that the chief's been away."

"Another thing to be grateful for," he went on, after a minute's pause. "We haven't had that visit from Stark yet."

"Bedad, but I'm thankful for that same," said O'Rourke. "Wid only ten men on the island 'tis a mighty poor chance we'd have against that murthering villain."

"Perhaps he knows that the skipper took the pearls away with him," suggested Austin. "And he's waiting till we've got a fresh stock to tempt him with."

"'Deed then, there's a good few in the safe this same minnit, Misther Chesney," said O'Rourke. "Mesilf, I can't size up what they're worth, but there's some mighty fine jools that we've tuk in the last two months."

"Yes, I don't think we've done badly," replied Austin, in a satisfied tone. "The skipper will be pleased when he sees them. But it will be a long job to fish out the lagoon."

"Aye, 'tis a terrible dale of money the captain wants," said O'Rourke, gravely. "'Twill be a million for the ship, and at laste half as much more for expinses, and for the rest of us. And wid him 'tis all or nothing."

"I know that," said Austin. "And it's a big price we have to pay for the extension of the lease. I don't mind telling you that I'm a lot worried about this Batol business. Any way you put it, Clive is running a fearful risk, venturing up over the pirate island alone. Suppose they manage to put a bullet through him, or suppose he gets caught in a gust of wind and upset?"

"Faith, I'll suppose nothing of the sort," retorted O'Rourke. "I'll not count throubles until they're upon us."

Before Austin could answer a dull boom came out of the mist seaward, and made them both start violently.

"A gun!" exclaimed Austin, straining his eyes through the fog, but seeing nothing. "Is it Stark?"

O'Rourke laughed scornfully.

"Would any pirate be fool enough to advertise himself like that?" he demanded. "Sure, if Stark was afther raiding us I'm thinking he'd come in the middle of the night. I belave 'tis the masther."

Austin's eyes flashed.

"By Jove! I hope it is. That would be his signal gun."

As he spoke he got up, and with one arm round the mast stood staring out seawards.

"We'll have Hayman up, anyway, so as to be ready for all emergencies," said O'Rourke, giving the rope two sharp tugs.

They were at once answered from below, and the ladder began to vibrate as the diver put his weight upon it.

Just as his great copper helmet came gleaming up out of the blue water Austin gave a joyful shout.

"It's the *Brilliant*. I see her."

O'Rourke helped Hayman over the side, and glanced round.

"Ye're right, lad," he said, delightedly. "'Tis the schooner hersilf. Up anchor, and we'll be at the landing-place in time to mate her."

Through the haze, about a mile from the channel, appeared the masts of the schooner. There was little wind, and every sail was set, even to the spinnaker and big balloon jib tops'l. Evidently, too, her engines were at work, for she was moving briskly through the water.

O'Rourke rapidly helped Hayman out of his suit, while Austin began to get up the kedge, and when this was done the three together got sail on the scow, and turned her bow landwards.

"There go her colours," cried Austin, as the Union Jack was broken out from the schooner. "By Jove! I'm looking forward to seeing old Clive again."

"Aye, we'll have a foine time this evening," chuckled O'Rourke.

By this time the schooner was clear of the belt of fog, and quite close to the channel.

"I suppose Coot has spotted her all right," said Austin, with sudden anxiety. "He won't go loosing off the mine."

O'Rourke gave a great bellow of laughter.

"Trust Sam Coot. He's got eyes in his head. Aye, watch there! Isn't he running up the answering signal over the stockade?"

Austin opened the locker in the stern-sheets and took out the case containing his glasses. They were the powerful prismatics which Captain Heritage had given him, and with which he had detected the men moving on the top of Batol.

"I ought to be able to see the skipper," he said, as he wiped the object glasses with his handkerchief and adjusted the screw.

"Aye, he'll be on the bridge," answered O'Rourke, who was steering.

Austin focussed the glasses and took a long stare at the schooner. O'Rourke, watching him saw an expression of doubt and surprise cross his face.

"I can't see the skipper," he said, presently. "There's only one man on the quarter-deck, and he's a stranger."

"The captain said he would be shipping a few more hands," said O'Rourke.

"No sign of Clive either," went on Austin in puzzled tones. "Why, there's hardly a soul on deck. That's a bit odd, surely."

"No one on deck?" repeated O'Rourke. "'Deed but that's a quare thing intoirely. It's hoping I am there's nothing wrong."

Austin was still examining the approaching schooner through his glasses.

Suddenly he turned to O'Rourke.

"O'Rourke, you remember the *Brilliant's* foremast being shot away?"

"I do."

"And how we stepped a new spar before she left?"

"Av coorse."

"Well, this ship's got an old foremast. What's more, she's got a different suit of sails and her six-pounders have grown."

"Is it crazy ye are?" exclaimed the big Irishman, sharply.

"Take the glasses and look."

O'Rourke did so.

He focussed them carefully, and stared hard at the schooner for quite a minute. The latter was now little more than a mile away. She had just passed the channel and was inside the lagoon.

There was a scared look on the Irishman's face as he lowered the glasses.

"'Tis not the *Brilliant* at all," he said, in a strange voice.

"That was my notion, though I didn't dare say so," replied Austin.

"Thin what in hiven's name is she?" demanded O'Rourke.

"If you ask me, I should say she was a pirate, and that this is a dodge of Stark's to sneak into the lagoon without chancing the mines," replied Austin, with tight-set lips.

"Begor, but I wouldn't wondher if you're right, lad," replied O'Rourke. "And if 'tis so, it's throuble we're in for, and no mistake."

"Hadn't we better get out the oars, sir?" asked Hayman, the diver, who had been listening with deep anxiety.

O'Rourke glanced at the schooner.

"No," he said, shortly, "we mustn't let thim divvles think we smell a rat. Kape her

as she's going. Wid this breeze, we'll be in before they rache the moorings."

"What do you intend to do, O'Rourke?" asked Austin.

"Git to the stockade, and hould it like grim death."

So long as he lives Austin will never forget that journey across the lagoon. The scow, though moving at about four knots with a following breeze, seemed to crawl like a snail across the rippling surface of the lagoon, while every minute the strange schooner that was so treacherously like the *Brilliant* loomed larger and nearer.

The Union Jack still floated from her jack-yard, and the same ominous stillness pervaded her decks. The more Austin looked at her the more amazed he was at the care with which she had been rigged out to resemble the *Brilliant*, and for the first time he began to realise the cunning and boldness of the Tiger of Batol.

Long before the scow reached the shore the schooner was within easy rifle range. Austin marvelled that she did not open fire, and said so to O'Rourke.

"Why would they?" growled the Irishman. "Sure they don't want to rouse the stockade. They know as well as you and I that we've got guns there, and they're thinking they'll humbug the lot of us properly."

"Great ghost!" muttered Austin. "Look at that. Two of the chaps from the stockade are coming down to the beach. Now if the schooner begins to shoot she'll have the half of us at one clip."

"'Tis not the half, but the whole lot of us she wants," said O'Rourke, coolly. "'Tis no bad thing those chaps have come down, for 'twill show Masther Stark that they don't suspect him."

"If we could only warn them," groaned Austin.

"Be aisy, Misther Denham. And if ye could just flutter a handkerchief to the schooner 'twould do no harm."

It went horribly against the grain, but Austin did so, and one of the scoundrels behind the rail actually had the cheek to respond to the signal.

O'Rourke grinned.

"'Tis something betther than a wave of a handkerchief that chap will be getting in a few minutes," he remarked, coolly.

It did Austin good to see how quietly the big Irishman took things, but his own heart was beating desperately hard, and he felt as though he could hardly breathe, while the scow covered the last few yards which separated her from the shore.

"Take it aisy," advised O'Rourke, calmly. "Pull the old scow well up on the beach. The longer we can fool thim the betther chanst we'll have of gitting safe to th' stockade."

The sham *Brilliant* reached the moorings just as O'Rourke and Austin and Hayman finished pulling up the scow. Already half her sails were off her and those on shore heard the rumble of her anchor chain through the hawse-hole.

The lagoon was shallow inshore, and the moorings were between 200yds. and 300yds. from the beach.

O'Rourke walked rapidly, yet without any appearance of haste, to the landing stage on which Sam Coot, the boatswain, and a man named Vincent were standing.

From Coot's expression it was plain that, if he did not actually smell a rat, he was at least puzzled.

He looked round as O'Rourke approached.

"What in blazes is the matter with the *Brilliant?*" he demanded, with a frown on his hairy face. "Has the captain lost all his crew overboard, and hired niggers instead of 'em?"

O'Rourke looked him straight in the eyes.

"Can ye kape quiet and not jump, Sam Coot, av I tell yez something that'll frighten ye?"

"Choke it up. I ain't no babby in long clothes," retorted Coot.

"'Tis that this ship is not the *Brilliant* at all."

Coot's jaw dropped slightly, but he showed no other sign of surprise.

"Not the schooner! Then for any sake, what is it?" he growled.

"'Tis Stark—Burnett that was."

"The Black Flag chap?" gasped the other man, Vincent.

"Shut your head!" ordered Coot, fiercely.

He turned to O'Rourke.

"The question is, will they start shooting if we make a bolt for the stockade?" he said, coolly.

"Av coorse they will," answered O'Rourke. "'Tis because they think we don't suspicion thim that they haven't started already."

"Then what the mischief are we to do—stand here and wait till the beggars come ashore and lay their black hands on us?"

"No; what we'll do is this—you and Vincent and Hayman will turn round, and sthroll quietly up the bache. Misther Denham and I

will stay here till ye rache the scrub. Thin we'll run for it."

Coot started to protest, but O'Rourke cut him short.

"Obey ordhers, Sam," he said, with a fierceness Austin had never heard from him. 'Tis aisier for thim spalpeens to be hitting five than two. Marrch, I tell ye."

Coot obeyed. He walked quietly away, back across the sandy strip of beach, and Vincent and Hayman followed him. O'Rourke and Austin were left alone on the little wharf.

"There's a chap with a rifle just behind the rail forrard," said Austin, speaking with a coolness which surprised himself. "I saw the sun glint on the barrel."

"The more fool him for not shooting," replied O'Rourke, in the calmest fashion imaginable.

Austin, with an almost superhuman effort, lifted O'Rourke to his shoulder, and staggered towards the thicket. Bullets crackled through the stiff foliage about them, but for the moment they were safe.

"If he doesn't pull soon 'twill be too late intoirely. Sam's near rached the bushes already."

"They're launching a boat," said Austin.

"Aye, and on the starboard side, so that we won't be seeing it till it pulls round the starn."

Then with a sudden change of tone:—

"Coot's safe. Run for your life!"

He spun round as he spoke, and dashed away up the beach at a speed surprising for such a big man.

It seemed to Austin that he himself had hardly turned to follow before a rifle cracked viciously from the schooner, and a bullet sang so close to his head that he felt its wind on his cheek.

He heard a babel of voices, shouted orders, and as he darted away across the blazing white beach a heavy crash of firing sent the echoes ringing across the wide lagoon, and the air was full of the scream and whistle of nickel-pointed projectiles.

He saw little puffs of sand rise from the hard strand on this side and that—saw O'Rourke's big figure flying along just in front of him.

He had just time to wonder how it was that they were neither of them hit when suddenly the big Irishman stumbled forward and pitched flat on his face.

Austin had no time to be frightened, or to consider the consequences of stopping under fire.

Instinctively he stooped, seized O'Rourke, and with an almost superhuman effort lifted him, and, carrying him over his shoulder, staggered across the last few yards which separated him from the thicket of grey-green palmettoes fringing the open beach.

Dragging his burden a few steps into cover, he laid him down behind the bulwark of thick creeping stems, and dropped, breathless and exhausted, beside him.

Bullets crackled through the stiff foliage above them, and from seawards they could hear the shouts of their enemies; but for the moment, at any rate, they were safe.

Austin rose gasping to his hands and knees. His face was white as he bent over O'Rourke. He forgot his own danger in anxiety for his friend. By the way in which the big Irishman had gone down all in a heap, without a sound or a cry, he feared the worst.

To his intense relief, though O'Rourke's face was purple, his eyes were wide open.

"Where are you hit?" demanded Austin.

"Hit, is it?" said O'Rourke, feeling his left side tenderly, about the region of the waist. "Bedad, I feel as if someone had kicked me harrd in the wind."

He fumbled a moment and then thrust his hand into the hip pocket of his trousers, and brought out a silver tobacco-box which Heritage had given him. It was absolutely flattened.

He looked at it ruefully.

"Och, the murtherin villains! They bruk me baccy-box!"

Austin burst out laughing. For the very life of him he could not help it.

O'Rourke gave him a comical look.

"'Tis laughing the other side of your face ye'll be in about two twos," he said. "Come on wid ye before thim niggers catches us."

And, scrambling to his feet, he set off full tilt in the direction of the stockade.

There was cover all the way, and though the shooting was constant they reached the camp in safety, and hurled themselves through the gate.

Sam Coot met them, and by the look on his face it was plain there was something seriously wrong.

"We've forgot the other boat," he said. "She's round the far side of the island, and Pagan and his chaps won't have a dog's chance of getting in."

CHAPTER XV

THE BATTLE IN THE BUSH

O'ROURKE and Austin exchanged glances of dismay. In the excitement of the moment they had all completely forgotten Pagan's men who had been working the far side of the lagoon. There they would lie, peacefully fishing away, and, unless the sound of the firing had alarmed them, quite ignorant of the terrible danger which threatened.

Austin was the first to speak.

"I'll go," he said.

"No, sorr. The captain would niver forgive me if ye tuk harrm," said O'Rourke. "I'll sind wan of the min."

Austin looked him full in the face.

"You'll let me go. I'm a better runner than any of them, and the scrub gives good cover. With any luck I'll be back inside of half an hour."

O'Rourke hesitated a moment.

"Go thin, if ye must," he said, in a curious, husky voice. "And the blissed saints be good to yez, and bring ye safe back!"

"Give me a rifle," said Austin.

Sam Coot handed him one of the Winchester repeaters with which the camp was armed, and a belt of cartridges, and he darted away. As he plunged into the thick scrub he heard shouts from the beach.

Stark's crew had landed.

The island was not much more than half a mile across from beach to beach, and under the palms in the centre the scrub was high enough to hide a man.

Austin knew every foot of the ground, and he ran as he had seldom run before, ducking in and out between the prickly thickets.

Within five minutes he had crossed the worst of it and was in sight of the beach. The broad stretch of snowy sand lay baking in the fierce heat, and the sunlight glittered on the wide lagoon, just ruffled by the gentle breeze, with the gulls flying white against the blue sky. Beyond, the smooth hills of surf broke in solemn thunder upon the reef.

The whole scene was so quiet and peaceful that for the moment Austin almost fancied the past hour had been an evil dream from which he was only now awaking.

But at that moment an angry crackle of firing burst out in the distance behind him, and he saw Pagan's pearling scow pulling hard for the shore.

It was no good exposing himself until it was necessary. He waited under the shade of a bushy hibiscus covered with brilliant crimson blooms until the big, flat-bottomed craft reached the shore.

Then he stepped out into the open, and waved a handkerchief to attract the attention of the crew.

Pagan waved back, and Austin rapidly signalled him in Morse code to leave the boat and join him at once.

Pagan, evidently alarmed by the firing which was now becoming heavier every minute, came running up the beach towards Austin with his two men behind him.

"What's up?" he cried, as he came near enough.

Austin put his fingers to his lips for silence.

Pagan took the hint, and waited till he was quite close before he spoke again.

Austin in a few rapid sentences told him what had happened, and Pagan's expression showed plainly how desperate he considered the situation.

"Not a gun among the lot of us," he muttered. "Is there any chance of getting through to the stockade, Mr. Denham?"

"Yes, if they didn't see me start," replied Austin, quickly.

"Whether they saw you or not, they're mighty apt to have spotted us," said Pagan, frowning. "We saw the schooner's topmasts over the trees, and reckoned she was the *Brilliant*. Then when the shooting began we were fair puzzled. Are the pirate chaps landed yet?"

"Must be by this time. They were getting out a boat twenty minutes ago. And by the sound of it, they're tackling the stockade right now."

"That'll give 'em something to chew on," said Pagan, grimly. "If O'Rourke gets to work on 'em with that Maxim I pity 'em. Aye, by the sound of it that's her at work now. Well, I reckon the sooner we get back and take a hand the better. There's not too many of us to tackle a crew like that."

He turned to his two men.

"Step lively, you chaps, and keep your thick heads below the bushes, or you'll be mighty apt to get 'em filled with lead."

For such a big, heavy man, Pagan moved wonderfully lightly and rapidly, and Austin was pleased to see the clever way in which his men copied him. In front the rifles cracked unceasingly, and the rattle of the Maxim was like a giant running a stick along a row of palings.

Insensibly Austin's spirits rose, and he began to hope that Stark and Co. were too busy with their frontal attack on the stockade to have leisure left to think of anything else.

But his experience of the ruler of the Black Flags was still young, and he was destined to be bitterly undeceived. Stark might have made one mistake in thinking he had fooled the islanders, but he was not likely to make a second.

The little party of four were barely half-way across the island when a slight rustle behind him reached Austin's quick ears, and looking back over his shoulder he caught a glimpse of a yellow face peering round a tree-trunk.

Without the slightest hesitation he flung up his rifle and fired. The head vanished abruptly, but instantly, with shrill cries, half a dozen villainous-looking ruffians came charging after them through the bushes.

"Run!" roared Austin, as he saw Pagan stop and face round. "Run! I'll keep 'em off. They need you in the stockade."

Pagan knew that it was his duty to go on. Knew, too, that for him and his men to await the rush of the attacking party would be sheer

suicide, for they had no weapons of any sort but their clasp-knives. With a sharp order to his men he dashed forward.

Austin sprang behind a tree for cover.

Only just in time, for bullets came pinging through the trees, shredding down twigs and small branches in a shower. One scored the bark not a foot from his head.

Dropping on one knee he began firing coolly yet rapidly.

The foremost of the Black Flags flung up his arms and went down without a sound, and a second spun round screaming, with a smashed shoulder.

The rest ducked back into cover, and for a moment all was quiet except for the firing around the stockade.

Austin's heart beat quickly, but he had no feeling of fear. On the contrary, a fierce exultation possessed him, and his eyes roved here and there, watching for the least movement that might betray the position of his enemies.

But not a leaf stirred, and he began to wonder whether the survivors had taken fright and cleared out.

If so, the best thing he could do would be to make a bolt for the stockade, but as he did not want to run the risk of a bullet through his back he tried the old ruse of sticking his felt hat on the end of his rifle barrel, and raising it above the bushes.

This, however, produced no result, and after one more searching inspection of the spot where the Black Flags had vanished, he left his post of vantage, and, bent double, darted away towards the stockade.

He had ten or fifteen yards of almost open ground to cover before he reached the next palmetto clump, but still there was no sign of his hidden foes, and repressing a strong desire to give a shout of triumph he dashed headlong into the thick of the stiff, grey-green foliage, felt his leg clutched by an unseen hand, pitched forward on his head, and next moment was lying perfectly helpless, flat on his face, with two short and squat, but powerfully built fellows on top of him.

As he made his mad dash for cover, a hand gripped him by the leg, and Austin pitched forward on his face. Then two powerful men fell upon him, and wrenched the rifle from his grasp.

Another wrenched his rifle from his hand, and at the same time a hard fist caught him by the scruff of the neck, jamming his face close against the ground, so that he could not move his head an inch or see the faces of his captors.

But if he could not see he could hear, and gathering his scattered senses by degrees he

realised that a lively discussion was in progress between the pirates. Though he could not understand a word, yet somehow he felt quite certain that the bone of contention was himself, and that while some were anxious to finish him out of hand—probably by sticking a kreese between his ribs—at least one of the party desired to keep him alive as prisoner.

"You no killee that man. Boss, him pletty angly if you do."

The voice broke in sharply upon the discussion, but Austin, who ought to have been relieved at this interposition on his behalf, felt a cold chill of horror as he recognised the queer hissing accents of Kwala, the Malay.

Better, he thought, to be stabbed and finished outright than fall alive into the hands of this little fiend. Over the supper-table in camp he had heard many a story of the cold-blooded cruelty of the head-hunting Malay pirates, and Kwala, he knew well, bore him the most bitter of grudges. His blood ran cold, and he made a sudden and frantic effort to release himself.

Quite useless. The weight of the two men who held him was beyond his power to move, and the only result was that the grip on the back of his neck tightened until it was agonising, while the man who held him burst into a hoarse and cruel laugh.

"Puttee lope lound him, and bling him along," came Kwala's voice again in the pigeon English which the others seemed to understand, for next moment Austin's wrists were seized, forced together behind his back, and tied tightly with a bit of coir or cocoanut fibre, so hard and rough that it fairly bit into his flesh.

Next he was jerked to his feet, and found himself the centre of a group of five men, four being pig-tailed Chinamen, with yellow faces, almond eyes, and high cheek-bones, the fifth the Malay Kwala, whose wizened face bore an ugly grin of triumph.

"You velly solly you stluck me before boss done with you," he observed, fixing his glittering eyes on Austin.

"Sorry, you miserable little reptile!" retorted Austin. "You'd be the one to be sorry if I had my hands free."

Kwala's brown face went livid, his deep-set eyes seemed to flash fire. He stepped forward and struck Austin full in the mouth with his leathery hand, splitting his lips so that they bled.

"Teachee you keep civil tongue," he growled, spitting like an angry cat.

Austin ground his teeth with rage, but with an effort remained silent. He was perfectly helpless, and it was mere foolishness to aggravate his captors into ill-treating him without having the slightest power to retaliate.

"Bling him along," ordered Kwala again. "Boss, him plenty pleased catchee this one."

One of the Chinese seized the end of the cord dangling from Austin's bound wrists, and giving him a brutal kick drove him forward.

Right through the thickest of the brush they drove him. Twigs lashed his face, insects bit and stung, but he could not raise a hand to help himself. When he stumbled—which was often—the yellow men evidently found his falls a subject of excellent jest, for they laughed consumedly.

What added to Austin's misery was his intense anxiety as to the fate of his friends.

The firing was as heavy as ever, but the brush was too thick to see anything of what was going on, and Kwala, with evident purpose, kept well back among the scrub.

At last, after an eternity of stumbling helplessly through the thickets, Kwala turned abruptly to the right, and Austin found himself out on the open beach almost opposite the landing-place.

CHAPTER XVI

THE TENDER MERCIES OF STARK

THE Malay gave Austin no time to look round and see how his friends were faring, but drove him at a run across the blazing beach.

Several boats were pulled up on shore. One was quickly launched, Austin was forced into it, the others sprang in after and rowed rapidly to the schooner.

Austin stared at the vessel, marvelling at her extraordinary resemblance to the *Brilliant*. But for the difference in the fore topmast, and the fact that her guns were eight-pounders instead of the sixes which the real *Brilliant* carried, she might have been the same ship.

Kwala noticed the direction of Austin's gaze, and grinned maliciously, showing teeth blackened by betel nut.

"Boss he fool you ploper," he chuckled. "Englishman tink him clebber, but no can tell own ship. Me tink you know dat ship better pletty soon."

Austin bit his lips to crush down the angry retort which rose to them. His silence annoyed

the ugly little Malay, who snarlingly ordered his men to hurry their prisoner aboard.

Half a dozen flat-faced, blue-bloused Chinamen stared at Austin as he was driven up over the rail, but he was not given time to take in any details. He was roughly hustled down the forward companion into the lower hold, the hatch was slammed down, and he was left to his own reflections.

Anything more nerve-trying than the long wait in the hot, stuffy darkness of his airless prison could hardly be imagined.

The brutes had not even had the decency to untie his hands, and the boy crouched there on the dirty planking with the cords biting into his wrists like hot irons, and cramp racking his shoulder-blades.

But anxiety racked him even worse than pain. Through the thick timbers of the schooner's sides he could still hear the sound of firing.

It seemed to go on for an interminable time, and Austin felt as if he would willingly give ten years of life to know what was happening. Strong as the stockade was, he could hardly hope that O'Rourke, with at most eight men, even if Pagan and his two had got in safely, would be able to hold it against Stark's horde of pirates.

He had horrible visions of the camp being rushed by the savage crew of Black Flags, and every mother's son inside murdered.

At last the sound of firing slackened, then ceased entirely. There followed some minutes of utter silence, and his worst fears seemed justified when all of a sudden he heard the Maxim break out again with its merry rattle.

Yes, there was no doubt about it. It was the Maxim, and in spite of his miserable plight, Austin absolutely shouted with relief and joy, for the sound told him that his own people, or some of them at least, were still alive to fire it.

Presently he heard bumpings alongside. Boats were coming off. There was a low, growling hum of voices, but no words were distinguishable. Then came the sound of feet on the deck above.

A sharp order, and with a bang that shook the ship one of her eight-pounders spoke. Then the other began, and for half an hour or more the two kept up a deafening bombardment.

In spite of the pain he was suffering, Austin almost laughed. Putting two and two together, he felt practically certain that Stark's party had been repulsed, and that the leader was venting his spite by shelling the camp.

Well, the shells might do damage, no doubt they would, but the defenders would not be harmed. Safe in their deep trenches, they could withstand siege guns if necessary.

Thirty or forty shots were fired, then silence fell again.

All of a sudden the hatch above was flung open, and a shaft of light streamed down into the dusty darkness, making Austin blink.

"You comee long topside," came Kwala's voice, sharp and angry. "Boss him wantee see you."

Austin rose with difficulty to his feet.

"I can't climb the ladder with my hands tied like this," he answered, coolly.

Spitting and snarling like an angry cat, Kwala came down. He had his big crooked knife in his hand, an ugly weapon with a blade as keen as a razor.

"You stlike me, me stlikee you," he growled, holding up the knife threateningly.

"Don't worry yourself, I'll wait till I've got something to hit you with, you brown-faced baboon," replied Austin recklessly.

For a moment he thought the Malay was going to spring at him, but the man was evidently under orders, and muttering fiercely to himself he cut the cords round Austin's wrists and followed him closely up the ladder, and so to the deck.

The fierce sun made Austin blink after his long imprisonment in the darkness below, but as his eyes became accustomed to the glare he saw two things—first that the deck was full of men, many of whom were wounded; secondly, that up in the north-west a bank of blue-black cloud was rising slowly out of the sea lying like a patch of night across the azure sky.

He glanced towards the stockade of which the outer banks were visible from the sea. They were scarred and torn with shell, and the roofs of the wooden houses had vanished, but his heart leaped as he saw the old flag still flying above the smouldering ruins.

Next minute he was standing in front of Stark.

Yes, it was the same man who had called himself Burnett, the same scowling giant with features that looked as though carved out of solid mahogany.

Towering a full head above Austin, he stood frowning fiercely down upon the boy. A formidable figure, with the gnarled muscles of his enormous arms and chest swelling under his flannel shirt, and his shaggy eyebrows almost hiding his deep-set, sullen eyes.

Austin, for his part, looked the giant full in the face. He felt that the other was trying to frighten him, but the only result was to stiffen his own resolution to show no sign of funk, and to carry off matters with a high hand.

"Wal, I fooled one of yew, anyways," said Stark, with a sneer. His accent was nasal American, of the type known as "Down East."

"Not much fooling about it," retorted Austin, briskly. "If you ask me, I think the boot's on the other foot."

A violent expression burst from Stark, but he checked himself.

"Yew infernal impudent brat!" he exclaimed. "The sooner yew recollect ez you're my prisoner the better it'll be for yew."

"The sooner you learn to treat your prisoners decently the better," returned Austin, sharply. "Even if you are a Black Flag, or a pirate, or whatever you choose to call yourself, you ought to know better than to leave a white man in the hands of a thing like that." And he pointed scornfully at Kwala.

"Ef yew're wanting to git a knife in your innards yew're going the right way to work," said Stark, ominously.

"I'd rather have half a dozen knives in me than be treated as that coffee-coloured sweep has treated me," answered Austin, boldly. "Shoving me down in that filthy black hold, to be half suffocated."

"I reckon yew'll hev company down there before long," sneered Stark. "So ef it's dark it won't be lonely."

"Company," repeated Austin. "Where's it coming from?"

"Out of that there camp o' yourn, Britisher."

Austin laughed outright.

"Take you some time to collect it," he said, scornfully.

Stark, who was plainly very sore at the failure of his first attack, burst out into violent abuse of Austin, Heritage, and the rest of the pearling party.

"I don't keer ef it takes a week," he declared, violently. "I'll hev 'em. I'll starve 'em out ef I can't get 'em no other way. How many men hev ye got there?" he demanded, threateningly.

"Enough to beat you and your whole crowd of yellow-skinned thieves," said Austin, coolly.

Bound and helpless, Austin saw Kwala creep along the deck towards him, the crooked kreese clutched in his right hand.

Stark's huge fists clenched convulsively. For a moment Austin believed that the giant would strike him to the deck. But he did not budge an inch, and kept his eyes fixed upon the man's fierce face.

With an effort Stark controlled his rising passion.

"Air yew going to answer my question, or air yew not?" he asked, in a deep, rumbling tone.

"No," said Austin, plump and plain. "I'm not going to give you any information at all, except that Captain Heritage will make things precious hot for you when he comes back."

Kwala, who had been standing by listening scowlingly to the conversation, broke in:—

"You lettee me talk to white boy, boss. Me soon makee him speak. One little piecee stling round him head. He talkee pletty klick."

Austin shuddered inwardly. He had heard of the torture of the knotted cord, and knew that he might just as well expect mercy from a shark or a tiger as from the malevolent little brown man.

"Yew hear what Kwala says?" said Stark. "I guess yew'd cough up all yew know mighty quick once he gets to work on yew. Now then, how many chaps are there in your camp, and how much grub have they got?"

Austin remained disdainfully silent.

"Yew'd jest ez well speak naow ez later," continued Stark, glowering down at Austin. "Plucky yew may be, but I've yet to see the feller ez cud stand a knotted cord twisted around his forehead. Ez soon ez his eyeballs begins to bulge he can't git it out quick enough."

Austin's blood ran cold. So they meant to torture him after all. Well, if that was their intention they should have some good cause to do so.

Like a flash he spun round, drove his fist full into Kwala's ugly, wizened face, knocking him half-way across the deck, and springing across his prostrate body made a dash for the rail.

He meant to fling himself overboard, and take his chance of being drowned or shot, or seized by a shark. Anything was better than to be delivered into the hands of the Malay with his knotted cord.

But the deck was crowded with Chinamen. One thrust out his foot and tripped Austin. In another moment Stark had him by the collar and dragged him back.

"Try that game, would ye?" he roared, shaking Austin till his teeth rattled. "Smart, yew think yerself? By criminy, I'll make you smart! Here, Kwala, he's your meat."

But Kwala lay where he had fallen, Austin's knuckles had caught him exactly on the point of the chin, giving his spine the jolt which boxers know as a "knock-out." For some minutes, at any rate, neither Austin nor anything else would interest his black soul.

"Knocked silly, is he?" continued Stark. "Wal, I reckon he'll come round in a little while, and the Britisher will keep. Jeerusalem, I wouldn't be in his shoes when Kwala gets to work. Here, some o' yew, bling lope, makee tie white man."

A couple of ruffianly looking fellows sprang forward, and in a minute Austin was tricked up so that he could not move, and flung down like a sack on the hot planks of the deck.

Stark, now thoroughly roused, glared round.

His eyes fell upon the Union Jack faintly fluttering in the dying breeze over the battered but unbeaten stockade.

"Wing Loo!" he shouted.

A squat, broad-shouldered fellow, with a hideous face deeply pitted with small-pox scars, stepped forward.

"You makee shoot dat flag. Me gib you five dollar you blow him away."

As Wing Loo hurried off to his gun a low, hoarse rumble rolled across the sea. It was like the trampling of horses at a great distance. The hot air reverberated with the sound.

Austin, screwing his head round, saw that the cloud which he had noticed when he first came on deck was spreading rapidly. It now covered nearly a quarter of the sky with a blue-black pall. Its upper edge was fringed with great masses of snowy white vapour which rolled and boiled like surf on a hidden reef.

In spite of the fact that the sun was still shining brilliantly, the lightning which seamed the heart of the great storm-cloud was plainly visible.

It flickered and danced ceaselessly in and out amongst the gigantic folds of the vaporous curtain, and even as Austin watched, the low, sullen note of the still distant thunder came muttering again over the still water.

The air had become perceptibly closer during the past few minutes, the breeze had fallen, and the sun burned with an almost intolerable sting.

Stark, in his fury, seemed not to notice the coming storm.

"Sharp with that there gun!" he bellowed. "Git the other one to work, some o' yew. I'll lay we'll pound them Britishers into cod-roe afore we're done with 'em."

A third time the thunder boomed. Louder now and longer than before. It was so heavy that it seemed to shake the stagnant air. The storm-cloud was lifting more and more rapidly up. Its shadow turned the northern sea to lead, and its fleecy edge was fast nearing the great red globe of the sun.

A man whom Austin had not noticed before came up out of the main hatch, and walked aft to where Stark stood. He looked as if he might once have been white, but his leathery face was burnt with sun and wind till it was as dark as Kwala's. He was long and lean, with arms like an ape's, and a great white scar ran from one corner of his left eye almost to his ear.

He went straight up to Stark and spoke to him.

His words were drowned in the crash of Wing Loo's gun, but he pointed to the sky with a lean forefinger, and Austin understood that he was drawing Stark's attention to the approaching tempest.

Stark gave a snarl of rage, strongly reminding Austin of a dog that sees its bone snatched away from it.

For a few seconds he stood apparently undecided, then he stalked back to the middle of the quarter-deck, and in a voice rivalling that of the thunder itself gave orders to cease firing and get up the anchor.

Instantly the decks were a scene of bustle and confusion, and in less than five minutes the schooner, with every sail furled, was making back for the entrance to the reef under her motor power. By the way they drove her Austin fully realised that their object was to get sea room before the storm broke.

Austin himself lay helpless on the deck. His wrists and feet were so firmly tied that he could not move one way or the other.

From where he lay he could just see the tops of the palms on the island, and the Union Jack still hanging motionless on its staff above the stockade. But very soon these both faded away, and all that was left was the sky—turquoise blue to the south, black as ink and seamed with electric fire to the north.

With her engine driving her at its utmost the schooner soon reached the reef, and by the rise and fall of the deck beneath him Austin knew that she was making the passage to the open sea.

He remembered the mines set in the entrance, and for a moment thrilled with wonder as to whether his friends ashore would touch the button that fired them, and so destroy the schooner. The thought did not frighten him. He was almost beyond the sensation of fear. Indeed, he would cheerfully have given his own life if Stark and his ruffianly crew could have shared the same fate.

But nothing happened. Either the wires had been cut by Stark's people, or O'Rourke, knowing he was aboard, had refrained from exploding the mines, and the schooner ran quietly through the channel and reached the open sea.

By this time the edge of the storm-cloud had crossed the face of the sun, and the hot glare had given way to a dull, slaty twilight, which, however, was constantly illuminated by the steely flicker of the lightning.

But there was no breath of wind, and the sea lay sullen as oil beneath the leaden pall.

Stark was at the wheel. It was plain that he knew something out of the way in the shape of weather was coming, for his grim face was set and his hard eyes fixed on the monstrous cloud.

Apparently he had forgotten Austin.

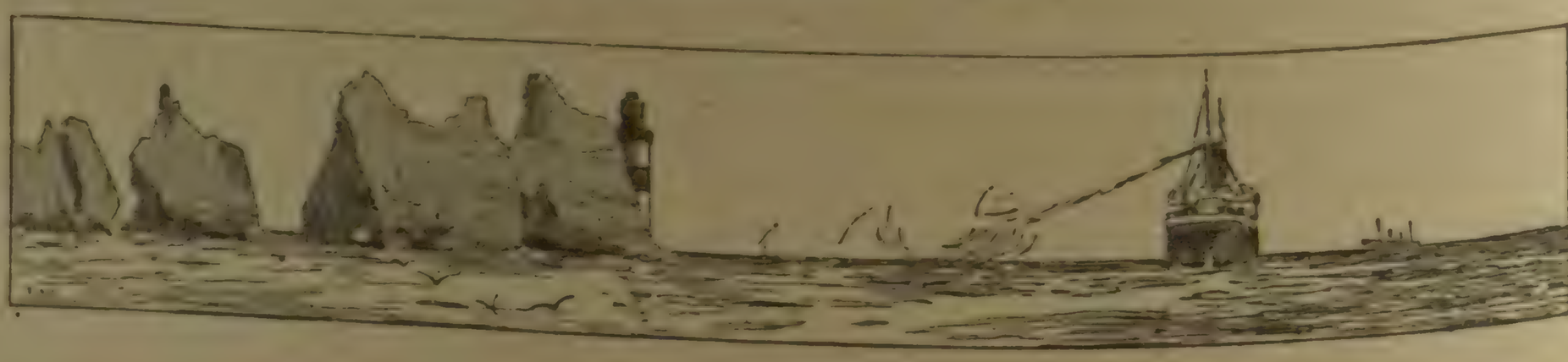
His men were all at their stations ready to get what sail was needed on the schooner as soon as they saw from what quarter the wind would come. The hatches were all battened down.

In the deathly stillness Austin heard a rustling sound to one side of him. Rolling over painfully, he looked round to see what had caused it.

What he saw was this—Kwala, who had recovered his senses, was creeping on hands and knees along the deck towards him. On his face was an expression of absolutely diabolical hatred and rage, and in his right hand he gripped hard the crooked kreese.

Plainly he meant instant and deadly vengeance, and Austin, fettered as he was, was utterly unable either to defend himself or to escape.

(To be concluded next month.)



The CHARM of PHOTOGRAPHY

Photos, Kodak.

By REGINALD ARKELL

EVERY fellow who is worth his salt has a hobby of some kind or another. One likes one thing, one another; but, in the opinion of most, nothing comes up to photography. The great thing about this best of all hobbies is that the actual handling of a camera is interesting in itself, and the knowledge gained is of permanent value.

Until recently, photography was almost entirely out of the question as a hobby. The camera had to be filled in a dark room, and emptied in a dark room; while the developing had to be carried out under similar conditions. Often, of course, no such room was available. Enthusiasts were forced to wait until night for an opportunity to do the slightest thing, and it was impossible to obtain satisfactory results. But the modern film camera, with its daylight developing apparatus, has changed all that.

In the old days I frequently filled my camera in bed, to the great amusement of the rest of the fellows who had not been bitten by the craze. When the word went round that I was at work in my "dark room," all sorts of jokes were played, and dozens of plates spoiled in consequence. I was a pioneer, and had to pay the penalty for being a little in advance of my time.

Developing was even more difficult. The science master was sympathetic, and helped me with the chemicals; but the nearest thing I could get to a studio was the boat-shed, the "lab." being lighted in such a manner as defied all hope of conversion.

Nowadays a fellow can slip a spool into his camera on the playing field if necessary. He can carry spare films in his pocket, and he can develop in his study without troubling even to draw the blind. As a result, the number of photographers in our schools has increased to a remarkable extent. Good cameras are cheap; there is no risk of spoiling films; and convenient times can be chosen for doing the work. The fellow who cannot take photographs will soon become as extinct as the dodo.

There are so many reasons why a fellow should make photography a hobby that it is difficult to know where to begin. It goes without saying, of course, that in the circumstances films are the only satisfactory medium; plates are much too cumbersome, and all the old difficulties still apply to them in large measure.

Personally, the photography I learned during those early days has proved invaluable. The knowledge and facility then gained have stood me in good stead ever since, and were the direct means of my securing the position I now hold. Besides which, I have a collection of school "snaps" that I would not sell for any money.

One need not be a professional photographer to find the value of a knowledge of the camera. To-day, when most journals are illustrated to a greater or less extent, a newspaper man finds such knowledge essential. The architect can snap buildings that interest him; the artist can place his observations on permanent record; the estate agent can save pounds in the course of a year by taking his own photographs of properties, and so it goes on. The list could be continued almost indefinitely.

The fellow who is wise recognises this, and paves the way accordingly. As I have said, the cost in all departments has been reduced to the minimum, but if he keeps his eyes open he can make his hobby pay for itself and show a profit at the end of the term. Papers are always willing to pay for photographs of curious things or unusual happenings. Cricket and football groups can be taken and sold at a small profit, and sittings for individual portraits can be arranged. There is unlimited scope in this direction.

Considering the matter from a less commercial point of view, how can you better decorate a study than with photographs of friends you have met, or things you have seen? Exchanges can be made with other fellows who also have cameras, and by this means a complete record of the term's happenings can be secured. These should be collected into a suitable album, and will become more valuable as the years go on.

When you are home for the holidays it is much easier to describe what has happened since you last met with the aid of photographs; and, contrariwise, snap-shots taken during the "vac" will help you to spend many pleasant evenings during term.

Given a fellow with a little organising ability, it should not be difficult to start a camera club in any decent school. Once this were done, exhibitions could be held, and prizes given for the best prints. There should be no difficulty in securing a permanent championship medal for annual competition, and if all pictures were priced, some sales would no doubt result. The winning print could be enlarged, and in this way an interesting collection formed.

The same remark applies to Captain Clubs throughout the country. Each club could have a photographic section, and pictures of sufficient interest might even be reproduced in this paper. That, however, is for the editor to decide. There is no doubt at any rate that he would be personally interested in the results obtained, and many might find a place on the walls of his sanctum.

Bullock's Masterstroke

A Splendid Hockey Story

By CAPTAIN G. A. HOPE

CHAPTER I

THE RIOT IN THE CLASS-ROOM

"REALLY, this is past a joke!" exclaimed Mr. Pater, springing up angrily.

He was a very young man but decidedly rising in his profession. Already he had been given a house—the Lower School House, it is true, but still a house—and he was then busy, or trying to be, on a scholastic work which was to add to his fame, and pave the way to better things.

But the Lower School had no sympathy with such ambitions. It was a half-holiday afternoon, about a fortnight after the beginning of the Lent term, and having nothing better to do they were amusing themselves in their own characteristic way, which was not exactly an aid to accurate brain work.

At first the riot had not penetrated through the lobby which separated his study from the entrance-hall of the house. But by degrees it had dawned upon him that all was not as it should have been in the big class-room in the basement, which served as day-room for the sixty odd inhabitants of A House.

His attention began to wander from the intricacies of the Wars of the Roses, his "subject," till finally a series of terrific yells and crashes drove it off its course completely, and caused the protest recorded above, which was not by any means the only thing he said.

"What are those prefects doing?" he exclaimed, when he had relieved his feelings, for schoolmasters are only human after all. "In my day—really, I——"

He stormed through the lobby, and emerged during a temporary lull into the hall, where he met the very men he wanted, Bullock and Ridley, coming in in flannels. They were prefects from other houses with which they played games in the winter and summer terms, but they lived in A House, as assistants to the house-master in keeping his turbulent crowd in order.

"Really, you fellows," exclaimed the angry man, "what do you suppose you're here for? Here am I trying to work amid a noise like a boiler factory, which no one makes the slightest attempt to stop!"

The two prefects looked slightly surprised. The whole building was still—that is, as A House understands stillness—and they had heard no echo of the din.

"I'm very sorry, sir," said Ridley, apologetically. "We've been out playing fives; but we'll——"

I have been told that many a policeman has hurried to a house in which a once-popular game called "pit" was being played, under the impression that a violent and wholesale outrage was in progress. The peculiarity of the game is that it begins with a sudden outburst of yells, which grow rapidly in volume, assisted by sounds of moving furniture, culminating in a prolonged, crashing roar beside which the tube railway is peaceful and idyllic. Such was the sound that broke out at that moment in the basement of A House, cutting short Ridley's expression of his intentions.

Bullock and Ridley wasted no time about saying what they intended doing. They stood not on the order of their going, but went, like greyhounds from the slips, no longer wondering at their house-master's annoyance, and in record time reached the day-room door and flung it open, revealing a joyous riot, unprecedented even in their experience.

In those days at Castleburgh—I am speaking of many years ago, as will be obvious—cricket filled up the summer, as now, and football the winter term. But for the Lent term there were absolutely no organised games whatever: There was a racquet court and a few fives courts, but these, generally speaking, were for those great in the land only. A House had one fives court allotted to it three days a week, of which Tuesday was not one, which kept precisely four boys out of mischief for about three hours. There were paper-chases, but these also were only for the older and stronger boys.

Consequently, for ten weeks or so the sixty odd small boys had absolutely no legitimate occupation whatever. They were thrown entirely on their own devices, which, as may be inferred, seldom erred on the side of law and order. On this occasion the game appeared to be an extension of the famous action of Horatius and his friends on the bridge over the Tiber. Some budding genius had discovered that the forms in the class-room were just large enough to bridge the space between the two long lines of desks facing each other. The legs just fitted inside the front of the desks, the projecting ends resting on them, and thus a very pretty bridge had been made of four forms lashed together by box-ropes.

But bridges are made to be used, and when the prefects entered this one was in full use. One party was evidently holding it, while another was strenuously endeavouring to force a passage. It was covered with a seething, yelling mob of small boys, who were being continuously shed noisily on to the floor on either side. But this in no way checked their ardour. As each fallen warrior picked himself up he hurried to his own bridge-head, and hurled himself afresh into the rear of the fray, and shoved and yelled till fresh casualties brought him to the front again.

"Stop this at once!" exclaimed the two prefects. But their voices did not pierce the din, and no one had eyes for anything but the entrancing struggle on the bridge. Then, just as they were striding forward to take vigorous action, a long-suffering desk gave way, and scattered inkpots, books, and small boys in one heaving heap.

"Stop it, you young idiots!" roared Bullock, plunging into the disorder. "Do you want to kill yourselves?"

The heap resolved itself into its component parts, assisted unceremoniously by the two big boys, and it became apparent, to the surprise and relief of the prefects, that no one was hurt.

"What do you mean by this?" inquired Ridley, in ominous tones, as the rioters stood up, and began to look sheepishly at each other and at the ruin. But answer came there none.

"Loraine," pursued Ridley, "you're supposed to be a captain here. What do you mean by allowing this beastly row?"

Loraine, a thick-set, black-browed youth of fourteen, moved forward diffidently, and said that they had nothing to do, and that he didn't know that there was any harm in it. He had evidently been in the thick of the fight, for he had no collar left, and he was dust from head to foot.

"Didn't you?" replied Ridley, satirically. "Then I shall have to enlighten you. Wait here, all of you, till we come back."

The rioters shivered uneasily. They knew well enough what this meant. But as the prefects turned Bullock paused and said something to Ridley, and the two talked in undertones for a few moments.

"My word!" said Ridley at last. "I think you're right. Look here, you young ruffians, we won't lick you this time. Instead, get changed and run round Manton's Bridge, the whole lot of you."

This was two miles and a half, long enough to take the steam out of the most energetic member of A House. The two prefects saw them all out, and when the last of them was gone Bullock turned to his companion.

"Have you ever been to the Highlands?" he queried.

"No, I haven't. Why?"

"Then you've never heard of our national game," replied Bullock, as they moved towards the master's study.

"What's that—cattle-stealing?"

Before Bullock could reply the study door opened, and Mr. Pater looked out. He was still much ruffled, and his greeting was anything but cordial.

"You've taken your time about it!" he barked. "What was that crash I heard, and what have you done? The young desperadoes!" he exclaimed, just saving himself when Ridley had made his report. "Nothing to do, forsooth, so they must needs smash college property!"

Both Bullock and Ridley were going up to Mr. Pater's late college in the autumn, and he was not very much their senior in point of years. Consequently, being decent fellows, they faced the irate master boldly on behalf of the delinquents.

"Of course I know it's no excuse, sir," said Ridley, "but it's true all the same. There is absolutely nothing for kids to do in the Lent term."

"Then I'll give them something," retorted Mr. Pater, vigorously. "I'll see what a few extra lessons will do towards quenching their ardour."

"Excuse me, sir," said Bullock; "but if I may suggest it, I've thought of another plan."

"Have you? What is it then?" he said, testily, adding, when Bullock had finished: "That's rather a startling innovation here.

It's hardly A House's business to start a completely new line."

Mr. Pater had been at Castleburgh as a boy for seven years, followed by three at what might be described as a tied college, from which he had come back nearly direct as a master. In many ways he was almost a boy still, with all a boy's conservative spirit.

"Well, sir," joined in Ridley, "we must do something. Of course we can lick them, and give them lines, but we don't care about doing it. It isn't altogether the little beggars' own fault. I think Bullock's scheme will put an end to the row that's always going on."

"Well, perhaps you're right," returned Mr. Pater, who, now that he had cooled down, was beginning to be open to reason. "See about it, you two fellows, will you?"

CHAPTER II

STRONG MEASURES

A HOUSE received a forcible lecture at prep. that evening. After suitable comments on their behaviour and depravity generally, they were told that they would have to pay for mending the desk, and that steps would be taken to keep them out of mischief for the future. What those steps were was not revealed, and the uncertainty of their fate kept them very subdued for some days.

At first they thought it consisted of those obnoxious runs round Manton's Bridge, which they had to take every day after dinner. They resented these, especially, there being no football to train for, and the worst of it was there was no possibility of shirking them, for Bullock and Ridley first assembled them all, and then ran with them. The function caused a mild sensation in college, and by the end of the second day Bullock and Ridley were being considerably chaffed about their "infant school."

The seething mob of yelling boys cared nothing for the tremendous row they were making, but hurled themselves again and again into the fray.

But not till the following Tuesday did the real details of Bullock's scheme transpire. On that day they assembled as usual in the big class-room, but neither of the prefects, nor

yet Loraine, nor half a dozen more of the biggest boys in the house were there. They waited in some trepidation; the unknown and mysterious is always full of fear for small boys—till suddenly steps were heard outside, followed by a violent bang against the door.

Then, after a moment's fumbling, the door was thrown open, and the absentees entered, each carrying an armful of sticks—ground ash, such as the sports stewards used at the end of each term with great zeal and effect to keep the course clear, but heavier and thicker, and with crooked handles.

The small boys' apprehensions increased. Sticks had but one purpose in their simple scheme of existence. The only saving clause consisted in the fact that there were enough sticks to supply one for each victim, which was a quite unheard of and unnecessary luxury.

Then all was made clear.

"All here?" said Bullock. "All right. Now, you chaps, if you want to break anything in the afternoons now you can go for each other's shins. You're going to play hockey, or shinty, as we call it in my country. Come on, and take a stick each."

There was no enthusiasm. In those days, strange as it may seem now, hockey was almost unheard of in England. No school played it, and it was known only as a formless scuffle carried on on ice with a bung, or under the name of bandy, by rustics on village greens. In no sense was it a game for lordly public school men. What did Bullock mean? They were not cads, that they should play this game, fit only for rank outsiders.

However, there was no escape. Each boy had to take a stick, four teams were chosen, and the whole sixty marched out into court, where a fair number of loafers were collected to enjoy the daily sight of the "infant school" going out.

Among others by the lodge they were met by Nutt and Paghal, two prefects, members of the fifteen, and very great men indeed—but nowhere so much as in their own esteem.

"Hullo! What are you chaps doing with those sticks?" queried Nutt, in tones of superior astonishment.

There was no answer. They felt that they were being made fools of, and had no desire to explain matters further. So when Bullock and Ridley reached them Nutt repeated his question.

"What are you two doing with your infant school to-day?" he inquired. "Can't they walk without sticks, the poor little dears?"

"We're going to play hockey," said Bullock, shortly.

"Hockey—what's that?" returned Nutt, incredulously. "Let me see. Oh, I know—of course. My dear chap—really! Castleburgh is not a board school."

"No; so I expect you do feel a bit queer," retorted Bullock, as he passed by. "Cheer up, you'll get used to it in time."

As a retort it was crude, but it served.

Nutt had no reply ready, beyond stating that Bullock thought himself very clever, he supposed; and the "infant school" passed on, grinning and chuckling, and in a better temper at having seen a passage of arms between two such great men.

The experimentalists commandeered two football grounds, the general principles of the game were roughly explained, and two teams were sent off to put them into practice unassisted, while Bullock and Ridley played on opposite sides with the remaining two.

As a game, the result was unpromising at first. But by degrees it began to dawn upon them that there was something in it. The mere fact of hitting at a ball was something. It is true that they did not hit it very often, but as they warmed to their work they swung their sticks bravely, and if they did not hit the ball they hit something else.

By half-time something very like a game was being played, and, considering them capable of going on alone, Bullock and Ridley went over to the other ground.

There was no lack of enthusiasm here. Except the goal-keepers, everyone was playing centre-forward, and the prevailing opinion appeared to be that a modified Rugby scrum, together with charging as at Association, was quite orthodox at hockey.

Also, from the remarks that were being passed, it appeared that Bullock's recommendation had been taken in earnest. But, strange to say, they seemed to be enjoying themselves thoroughly, regardless of the small mob of scoffers who were assembled on the touchline.

"Half-time!" shouted Bullock. "How are you getting on—any goals?"

"One all," replied Loraine, fingering his shin tenderly. "They said they got another, but it was rushed through and kicked, so I said it wasn't to count. And it didn't!"

"I thought I heard an argument just now," remarked Bullock. "Well—how do you like it?"

"It isn't at all bad; but it's beastly hard to hit the ball."

"You'll get in the way of it. But, look here, you mustn't play in a bunch."

The teams were spread out correctly, but the instincts acquired at Rugby football were still too strong for them, and the forwards continued to bunch. However, the fun was fast and furious. Sticks were swung vigorously, sounds of blows and cries of pain resounded over the field, and the ball travelled spasmodically.

At last Bullock judged that enough steam had been taken out of the players, and he gave "No game," and as he and Ridley started to limp off the ground, they were met by Nutt and Paghal.

"Splendid game!" said Paghal. "A masterstroke of yours, Bullock. Reminds me of an Irish faction fight. But, I say, why trouble to come up to the field? You could bang each other's shins with less trouble in A House. How do you score? By the number of broken shins?"

"I say," chimed in Nutt. "Of course it's no business of mine, but I think it's playing a bit low for two hefty great brutes like you to go knocking the wretched infant school about and call it a game. Hit someone your own size."

"All right. You two come and play to-morrow," retorted Bullock, laughing. "You'll find that the infant school can take care of themselves when it comes to knocking about! We'll lend you sticks."

"Awfully good of you," said Nutt, "but I prefer games you play with a ball. You don't have one at hockey, do you? At least, no one seemed to be hitting one. But, bar rot, why don't you chuck it?"

However, prefects are not appointed to A House for scholarship alone. Bullock and Ridley had been sent there as being the best fitted of all the Sixth to deal with that turbulent crowd, and nothing was further from their thoughts than drawing back. They drew up a code of rules, mostly concerned with charging, unauthorised scrums, and too wild use of sticks, and saw that they were obeyed.

Four days a week, regardless of jeers, they had the "infant school" out to play, and on Mondays and Fridays they made them run round Manton's Bridge. As soon as possible they differentiated the games into upper and lower, and after consultation with Mr. Pater, a hockey fifteen jersey was adopted—a thick white garment with a red rose on the left breast—and Loraine and two or three others were formally promoted into it.

After this hockey became an institution at A House. With the distinction of a jersey to play for, all desire of giving it up disappeared. By the end of a fortnight or so the resemblance to a faction fight had vanished, and it had really become a game, and not a scuffle.

CHAPTER III

"A" HOUSE *versus* THE SCHOOL

BUT the very circumstances which called the game into being were very nearly the cause of its collapse. In common with A House, the rest of the school had nothing to do, and consequently, to pass the time, it became a recognised amusement to go up and jeer at the A House game. In their hearts a good many thought the move a sound one, but no one dared to say so. The share of the two prefects was lost sight of. The hockey was considered a Lower School venture, pure and simple, and it was not to be thought of that the rest of the school was going to take its cue from its tag, rag, and bobtail.

At last matters reached a climax. The number of scoffers had increased, till finally, one afternoon, considerably more than half the school assembled on the touch-line, and cheered ironically and continuously throughout the game. The row was so pronounced that the Head, on his way out for a walk, was attracted up to the field by it, by which time mere derision had developed into a very promising rag.

There was only one thing to be done, and he did it. He ordered the game to be stopped and the field cleared, while Mr. Pater, Bullock, and Ridley were summoned to an immediate conclave.

"How did you come to start this game, Pater?" he said. "Yes, yes, quite so," he added, when Mr. Pater had explained. "A very good idea, too. But really I am afraid it will have to be stopped."

Bullock's and Ridley's faces fell. By this time they were thoroughly enthusiastic over this "infant school" game.

"Can't we have another chance, sir?" said Bullock. "It's doing a lot of good to the fellows in A House, and they're ever so much less trouble than they were."

"Yes, that's quite true," joined in Mr. Pater. The Wars of the Roses had progressed appreciably since the new departure.

"Yes, I understand that," said the Head. "But, really, I cannot run the risk of another disgraceful scene such as we have just witnessed. The people in the houses by the field will complain."

"Can they play somewhere else, sir?" suggested Mr. Pater. "On the common, for instance."

"It is bleak, very bleak," said the Head, shaking his head. "Besides, I doubt if the town council would be willing to allow it. No, I'm afraid there's nothing for it."

"But supposing we managed to persuade the school that it's worth playing, sir?" said Bullock.

"Excellent, but how could it be done?" replied the Head. "Of course I could order the school to play hockey, but that is a procedure I am little in favour of. In unimportant things it is my rule merely to guide, not to force the college in any direction."

"Well, sir," said Bullock, "this is my idea. We'll challenge the school to play our team—all comers."

The Head smiled.

"That is courageous, Bullock," he said. "But I fear a counsel of despair. However, admitting that your challenge is taken up, in the first place, how can little boys play against big ones? Again, supposing they do, how will that affect the case?"

"Well, sir," replied Bullock, "in the first place, size doesn't go for much in hockey. One or two of them—Loraine for one—are better than Ridley and me already. And, of course, we should play, too. As to the second, they'll see that it's a jolly good game if they play it."

"Well, you may be right," said the Head. "However, I will give you the benefit of the doubt. I will watch the game myself, so that there may be no unseemly disorder."

Accordingly, as the school went to call-over in the Inner Court, it saw a notice in a conspicuous place on the notice-board in the Colonnade, stating that A House team, including Bullock and Ridley, wished to play any other fifteen boys in the college at hockey on the next half-holiday. Sticks would be provided. It must be mentioned that, in its first days, hockey was played fifteen a side.

Beastly cheek, was the very least the school called the challenge. Bullock and Ridley were big men, prefects and in the fifteen, and they could do anything. But that a lot of A Housers should think that they could play anyone in the coll.!

Anyone! Fifteen, forty; it didn't matter who! Oh, no! They must be taught the error of their ways, and that promptly. And with this end in view, several Lower School boys were kicked on sight by others a very little bigger. But it did not occur immediately to anyone to think of trying to teach them that they could not play hockey.

There happened to be a prefects' meeting that night, and when Bullock and Ridley arrived they were at once conscious of a certain tension in the atmosphere. They were popular, on the whole, but the more conservative element resented the stubbornness with which they had pushed their innovation in the teeth of popular prejudice, and they guessed that some mention would be made of it.

They were not disappointed. As soon as the ordinary business was done, Nutt stood up, and said:—

"Mr. President, I wish to move a vote of censure on Messrs. Bullock and Ridley."

"On what grounds?" said the senior prefect, who was an athlete as well as a scholar, and had been captain of the fifteen the previous term. The Sixth was very strong in athletics at that time.

"On a matter reflecting discredit on the Sixth Form and on the school at large——"

This was a serious matter. The passing of a vote on such grounds meant suspension from attendance at meetings, and then the infliction of fines for non-attendance—"by their having introduced a ridiculous game, and further by their having associated themselves with the Lower School in issuing a general challenge."

No one smiled. The Sixth preserved, generally, an awful dignity in public. But in the privacy of their meetings, the proceedings of which were never divulged, they unbent considerably, and motions even more remarkable than this one were frequently put forward.

Howson, the senior prefect, held up his hand for silence, and then wrote the motion down, and while he did so Bullock and Ridley whispered eagerly together, and laughed silently.

"Who seconds this motion?" said Howson, blandly.

Paghal began to rise, but before he could do so Bullock was on his feet.

"I do, Mr. President," he said.

"That's absurd!" exclaimed Nutt, hotly, as a ripple of laughter ran round the room. "You can't do it."

"I can. Show me anything in the rules to prove that I can't second any motion I like," retorted Bullock.

"It reduces the whole thing to a farce," said Natt.

"Well, isn't it one?" retorted Bullock. "I like farces, always did, and I don't want to be out of this one."

"Order, gentlemen!" said Howson. "Address yourself to me, please. Mr. Bullock is perfectly in order in seconding the motion, and I have recorded the fact. Now, Mr. Nutt, please state your case."

"I don't see much use in doing it now," snapped Nutt, sourly. "But I wish to point out that the dignity of the Sixth is hardly maintained when prefects introduce puerile village-green games, and then issue general challenges to the school at them. They might just as well start marbles and peg-tops in Inner Court. Castleburgh may not be a very old school; but at least it has always kept a high standard in these things, which Messrs. Bullock and Ridley are lowering."

"Poor old Castleburgh!" said Bullock. "Mr. President, the conduct of Ridley and myself beggars description. Having to live in A House, and being, together with our revered master, nearly deafened by the rows, to work off their energy, and, incidentally, to save college property from ruin, I thought of teaching them the game we call shinty up North, to give them a healthy occupation. Could any conduct be worse? To keep the kids out of mischief! And as to its being puerile, and so on—well, let Mr. Nutt take up our challenge, and if he can lick us, well, I certainly should not care to take any more trouble over teaching the kids the game."

Nutt put all his strength and weight into the third stroke, but in some unaccountable way everything went wrong, and he came down heavily amid a burst of laughter.

"I shall do nothing of the kind!" snapped Nutt.

"Mr. President, the honourable member funks it. Please place that on record," remarked Bullock, blandly, and Howson complied.

Just then Paghal said something to Nutt, who nodded and then stood up.

"Do you make any restriction as to whom I bring?" he queried.

"None whatever. You can bring the whole fifteen if you like, except me and Ridley."

"And me," said Howson. "If Mr. Bullock will explain the rules, I shall be interested to referee."

"Proud, I'm sure," said Bullock. "Well, is it a bargain? This is Saturday; next Tuesday?"

"Right, at half-past two."

CHAPTER IV

VICTORY

THE news spread like wildfire, and for the next two days nobody talked about anything else, and one and all agreed that those A Housers deserved lamming wholesale for their cheek. It was understood that at least four fifteen caps were to be in the opposing team. But it was not understood that A House had nothing to do with the challenge, and that they had been as much surprised by it as had been the rest of the school.

But now they were committed to it they were looking forward to the match, especially so in view of the encouraging remarks Bullock and Ridley had made to them, and the promise of an unparalleled brew in the event of their success.

Practically the whole school went up to see the game, which was to be played on Big Game, the school fifteen match ground, but the advertised presence of the Head, and of the senior prefect and captain of the fifteen as referee, kept the lookers-on quiet.

But when they saw the crowd and the size of their opponents the A House contingent, except Loraine, showed unmistakable signs of funk, upon which that worthy at once cleared for action.

"Hi, Loraine! Don't crock the team!" exclaimed Bullock, turning back as he heard the sounds of battle behind him. "What's up?"

"These kids are funking it," said Loraine, scornfully.

"It's the other side who ought to be in a funk," said Bullock. "Why, they don't even know the rules, and have never handled a hockey stick in their lives!"

"But they're beastly big," objected one youth; "and some of them are in the fifteen."

"Footer isn't hockey, my son," said Bullock, "as they'll find out before long; and the bigger they are, all the easier to dodge between their legs."

The slender witticism caused a slight laugh, and the small champions stood round their chiefs while Howson read the few simple rules to their opponents. Then a solid indiarubber ball was put down in the middle of the ground. A House went to their stations, with Loraine as centre-forward, the two prefects being half-backs.

"I say," said Nutt, "what do you do now? Who hits off?"

At which Loraine grinned openly.

"No one," replied Bullock. "Loraine, show him how to bully."

Loraine did so, at which Nutt's spirits rose. It gave him a golden opportunity of damping Bullock's conceit over his "infant school."

The course of procedure was obvious. At the third stroke you banged the kid's stick away, then you barged into him—accidentally, of course—and having got him out of the way, hooked the ball along.

Nutt turned to his team, nearly all of whom were massed close behind him, and told them to back him up, and so missed certain cryptic signals which passed between Bullock and Loraine and a lanky but very speedy youth on the outside up the hill.

Once! Twice! Nutt put all his strength and weight into the third stroke, but in some unaccountable way everything went wrong. In the first place, the kid's stick was not there to receive the full force of his swipe. It only just touched it at the end of its swing. The accidental barge was very creditably executed, the only flaw in its success lying in the fact that the kid himself proved as elusive as his stick, and Nutt came down heavily amid a burst of laughter.

He was up at once, but the ball was far away up the hill, and the lanky youth was dribbling it neatly down the touch-line, with a galaxy of fifteen and forty caps in pursuit.

They caught him about thirty yards from the goal-line, but just as they did so he hit the ball down to centre, and as they turned in a body, they saw Loraine take it neatly and score a goal before the goal-keeper quite realised that he was there.

"Hard luck, Nutt!" said Bullock, grinning. "Not so easy as it looks, is it? Try again, old man."

Nutt set his teeth grimly, and did so.

But once more Loraine got the ball away before he was even ready to hit it. However, this time one of the forwards behind hit it, also by a fluke, and as it went back the whole phalanx surged forward in a body, overwhelming Loraine completely.

But the man who first reached the ball hit a large chunk of Wiltshire towards the goal,

the next man in his excitement hit Paghal on the leg with the back swing of his stick, and the ball remained where it was till Ridley slipped into the confusion and hooked it away and out to the wing.

Off went the lanky top-forward again, but before he had gone far two of the big chaps had caught him, and were slicing wildly at the ball.

But again size proved of little avail when you cannot hit the ball, and this was not easy with what was only a heavy walking-stick; so in their excitement they shouldered the A House man off. Then the whistle blew promptly, and the referee ordered a free hit.

After that A House had things pretty much their own way. Nutt's team only hit the ball effectually about once in a dozen times, and that usually by accident, and as collaring and charging were not in the scheme, their superior size and strength availed them nothing.

They rushed wildly about, and hit vigorously, but the ball went through their ranks and into their goal with almost monotonous frequency.

The first goal had been received in astonished silence. The spectators could hardly believe their eyes. The second, a few minutes later, called out a few cheers. At the third everyone applauded. But as goal succeeded goal, the lookers-on began to laugh joyously at the way the greatest men in coll. were being made fools of by A House, of all people.

And as the score of goals mounted up, and the laughter increased, Nutt's mighty men gave way to absolute demoralisation. They could make nothing whatever of these slippery small boys, who literally seemed to dodge between their legs; and the ball was even worse.

They rushed wildly about, swinging their sticks vigorously, but the kids did as they liked with them, and when at last the whistle was blown for "No game," one and all realised with painful certainty that there was a good deal in hockey.

"Well, what do you think of the puerile village-green game now?" said Bullock, grinning, as his exhausted and exasperated opponents collected at the end of the game.

"I don't know about the game," replied Nutt, who was not a bad fellow in spite of his superior ways, "but I do know that these kids of yours, especially Loraine, are holy terrors!"

"Do you think it's worth playing, then?"

"I do, anyway," joined in Howson, as Nutt hesitated a moment before eating his own words. "But I'm jolly glad I wasn't playing for Nutt to-day. It seems a very good game indeed. I say, Bullock, I suppose you'll have a game to-morrow? May I come and play with your chaps?"

This ended the opposition. When a man, doubling the parts of senior prefect and captain of the fifteen, actually asks permission to play a new game, and with Lower School kids, that game's future is assured.

The Head withdrew his embargo without a murmur, and to this day hockey remains the Easter Term game, not only at Castleburgh, but everywhere else. And all thanks to a few noisy Lower School kids of no importance whatever.

HINTS ON HOCKEY

By S. H. SHOVELLER

ENGLAND'S CAPTAIN AND CENTRE FORWARD

The author at home, and—

on the field.

WITH hockey so popular now at nearly all schools there must be a vast number of beginners at the game, many of whom have probably never handled a stick at all, and it is to these players, and to the schoolboy generally, I propose to devote this article.

In the first place, when starting to take up the game the beginner has several questions to ask himself as to what is required for it. Naturally the first requirement is the stick, and many an error is made by the schoolboy by choosing a stick far too heavy for him. Of course, the weight of a stick depends to a great extent on the size and strength of the user, but in my opinion the average weight for school use should be 19 ozs. to 21 ozs.

Some players advise the use of the bulger pattern stick, that is to say, a stick with the back of the blade bulged like the back of a cricket bat. This gives it increased driving power, but is inclined to make it unwieldy, as all the weight is in the head. I would certainly never advise a forward or half-back to use one, and think the best plan is to use an ordinary stick with the blade of uniform thickness, with a spliced cane handle like a cricket bat. Always use a rubber handle on the stick, as it gives a better grip, except in wet weather. A good stick can be purchased for 7*s.* 6*d.* or 8*s.* 6*d.* with rubber handle complete, and with ordinary care will last two or three years.

It is advisable to now and again rub a little salad or linseed oil on the blade so that the wood does not get too dry and begin to split. If a stick should commence to split at all, get a piece of adhesive plaster at any chemist's, or from your groundman, and bind round the affected part.

Never use any nails or tacks to repair a stick, as they are not allowed to be used except in the handle. It is always advisable to wear shin-guards, and the best way is to cut off the straps and use them under the stocking. A blow on the shin from a stick or ball may prevent one playing for a week or two, where a shin-guard would practically save the force of the blow entirely.

The boots are another rather important item, and if possible get the proper hockey boots with protection for the ankles and instep, as the foot is used a good deal in the game, at half and back especially, in stopping the ball. If a boy has already played football he will probably have some idea of the position he is likely to do best in; but if not, he must then discover by experience his best position.

If he be a good runner, a forward position should be his aim, as speed is a most important point, especially for the outside wing men. A good cricketer generally makes a good hockey player, as the strokes in the game are to a great extent alike, wrist work especially being a very important point to study. Onc you have chosen the position you wish to play in —viz., forward, half-back, or back—you must study that position carefully, and do your best to fill it with credit. Starting with the goal-keeper, I would certainly advise him to wear very stout boots and cricket pads, as he probably gets more blows than anyone.

The goal-keeper's position is a very responsible one, and he must have plenty of nerve and a good eye. He must always be ready to run out and clear if the ball is well ahead of a forward

and there is no back at hand, and in many cases if a forward has got clean away the only chance the goal-keeper has is of rushing out and tackling him on the edge of the circle. The position, generally speaking, for a goal-keeper to take up in the goal must be governed by his own common sense. He must always be ready to face the position the shot is likely to come from, and it is best to be more to the left-hand side of the goal, as you have your right foot and stick to guard the right-hand side with, while on your left you have to practically rely on your feet and hands. Once you have stopped the ball, get it away as quickly as possible, and if you have time to take aim, try and get it to one of your outside forwards. Don't forget that the goal-keeper may kick the ball in the circle, and many a goal is saved by a good kick where you would have no time to use the stick.

If you decide to take up the full-back position, either left or right, you must be speedy and able to turn quickly, and have a good eye. A back very often has no time to stop the ball with his hands or feet, and must hit it on the run, so that a miss-hit may mean the loss of a goal. A back should never get very far up the field unless his team is in the opponents' circle, and as a general rule should be between his own circle and the 25yds. line.

The beginner must remember that hard hitting does not make a successful full back. He must always be ready to nip in to intercept a pass from the wing forwards, but only as a last possible resource should he go out to the wing to tackle the outside man, as it is the half-back's duty to either stop the outside right or left or make him pass, and the full back must be prepared to stop the pass to the centre and get the ball away to one of his own side. If he hits wildly, with no idea of direction, the ball invariably travels up the field and is stopped by one of the opposing backs, so that it is plain his duty is to try and pass it to one of his own forwards, and so set them going. He must not try and dribble, except when absolutely necessary, as a goal is often scored by a back being robbed of the ball when trying to trick a forward. There are occasions when it is absolutely necessary to try to trick the forward by dribbling, but it should only be done as a last resource.

The half-backs have probably the most work of anyone on the field, as they have to be continually defending and attacking. They have to follow up their own forwards, so that they can be at hand to put them in possession again if they are robbed of the ball, and at the same time they have to mark the opposing forwards and prevent them getting into swing. The left half-back's duty is, generally speaking, to mark the opposing outside right, especially if he be very speedy, when he must mark him very closely. He must be very careful not to foul him by tackling him on the wrong side, viz., tackling him on his (the forward's) left side.

It is as well to quote the rule on the subject, viz.: "A player may not obstruct by running in between his opponent and the ball *nor cross his opponent's left, unless he touches the ball before his opponent's person or stick*, nor may he in any way interpose himself as an obstruction." The accompanying diagram should make this quite clear. A and B are defenders, and C and D two opposing forwards. C is in possession of the ball, and to stop him A must cross C's left in the direction of the arrow, and should he touch C's stick or person before touching the ball it is a foul stroke. It is a very frequent occurrence in even first class hockey, and in many cases it is the left half who is the culprit, as his opposing forward is generally on the wrong side of him when he is about to tackle. His correct way of tackling is to come round the back of C on to his right side, but if C is a speedy winger his chance is rather remote.

The centre half's duty is to mark the opposing centre forward, and to a certain extent the inside forwards. To be a successful centre half one must be able to dribble well, and also cultivate the push stroke, a flick with the wrists to give a short pass to one of your own forwards. The centre half must often dribble the ball up the field a bit, so as to draw one of the opposing halves on to him, and then make his pass to his own forward, who is unmarked at the time. Sometimes it is policy to give a long pass to either of the outside forwards, especially if they happen to be very speedy, and this is often a very successful manœuvre.

The right half is the easiest position of the three, as he is in the natural position to stop his outside man. Both wing halves should pass the ball at once to their forwards, and not

try to dribble at all. A good, crisp pass to a wing forward sets the attack in motion at once, whereas should a wing half start to dribble the ball, the opposing wing half can generally get time to interpose himself between the outside forward and the ball, and so prevent him getting away.

The forwards are naturally the most important part of the team, and to be really successful must learn to combine well together. Combination is the whole secret of the game, and the centre forward is the pivot of the line. One of the most important things to remember, especially for young players, is that scoring goals does not make a good player. Many and many a beginner has spoilt himself by scoring three or four goals in perhaps his first match, and after that his one endeavour is to repeat the performance in his next game, with the result that his side suffers through his selfishness, and if he allows it to develop it becomes a habit he can't get out of, and away go his chances of high honours.

I can recollect many instances of certain players not being chosen for the South, or even for England, for the simple reason that their chief idea was to score goals themselves. Get this out of your minds at once, and recollect you are playing for your side, and not for yourself. Isn't it far better to know your team has won, although you have no personally scored any goals, than to have scored perhaps two goals by individualism, and find the other side has scored three through combination?

The wing players should always keep right on the touch-line until nearing the circle, when they should come in slightly. Both outside right and left should use their discretion as to the correct moment to centre the ball, but as a rule they should centre when they reach the 25yds. flag, so that the inside players or the centre can get a clear run into the circle if the pass is not intercepted.

Occasionally, but only occasionally, the outside forwards should attempt, when well placed, to score a goal. The backs will be expecting them to pass the ball in, and may be taken by surprise by a quick dribble and a dash for the circle.

In centring from the outside left the player must take care not to turn on the ball, but must allow the ball to get slightly behind him, and make a half-turn of the body towards the goal as he is about to centre.

The inside left's duty is to feed his outside man whenever possible, except when he is nearing the opponents' circle, and then play should be confined to the three inside forwards. Now and again it is policy to give the wing man a pass when hard pressed near the circle, and if so, the latter should return it almost at once.

The centre is the most responsible position amongst the forwards, as his duty is to keep the wings well together, and act as a pivot to them. Short passes to and fro to his inside men, and now and again a long forward pass to his wing men, is the order of his play, and he must always be on the *qui vive* to snap up a pass and nip into the circle. One must vary his play according to circumstances, and on occasions it is well for the centre or one of the insides to make a pretence of passing, and make a dash through the defence. A goal is often scored by this means.

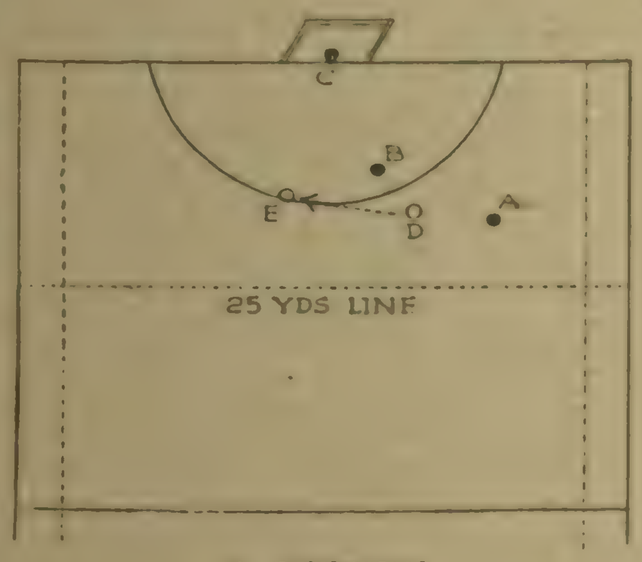
The inside right has his outside man to study chiefly, as it is from the wings the most dangerous attacks come. A very important point in forward play is to follow up a shot, before the custodian has time to clear it, if he has been able to stop it. Many goals are scored by this means, as the ball often rebounds from a goalkeeper's pads, and a smart forward can fasten on to it at once if he has followed up his partner's shot. Another very important point for forwards to study is the necessity of going back to help the defence, or tackling back, as it is commonly termed. One often sees a forward make no attempt to go after a half when he has taken the ball away from him, with the result that the half is left in undisputed possession, and can make an easy opening for his own forwards.

As a general rule, the forwards, especially the insides, should rely on their sticks for taking passes, as too much time is wasted in using the hand or foot.

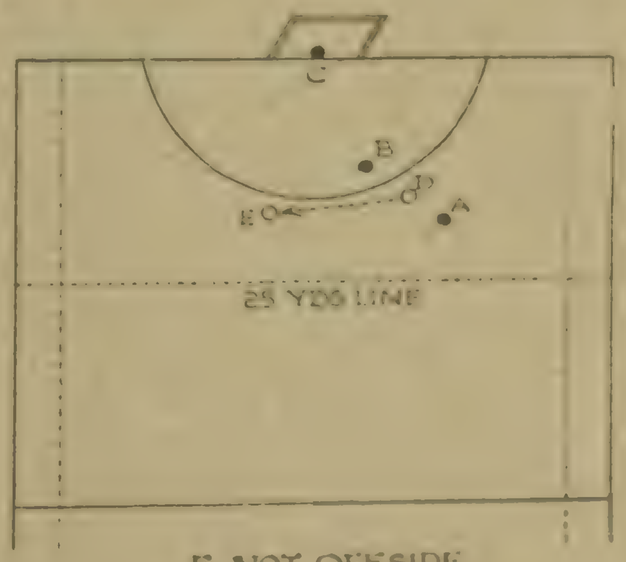
The "buliy-off."

The rules are not very hard to grasp, and perhaps a few remarks as to the general detail may be of use. In bullying off, many players still use the old trick of hooking the ball between their legs to their inside man. This is a foul stroke, and a good umpire will penalise the player every time he does it, as it comes under the latter part of Rule 12: "Nor may he in any way interpose himself as an obstruction."

In hitting the ball all players must be careful not to raise the stick above the shoulder, as this constitutes "sticks," and is penalised by a free hit, except in the circle, when the infringement is by one of the defending side, and then a penalty corner is awarded. For *any* breach of the rules by the defending side in the circle a penalty corner is in most cases awarded, though in the case of a very bad foul, when a goal would probably have been scored, the umpire has power to award a penalty bully. A penalty corner is a hit from any part of the goal-line, not less than 10yds. from the goal-post, to one of the attacking team outside the circle, while all the defending side must be behind the goal-line. In the case of a corner or penalty corner no goal can be scored until the ball has been stopped dead by one of the attacking team, or has touched the person or stick of one of the defending side *before* the last stroke of the attacking team.



E OFFSIDE



E NOT OFFSIDE

Perhaps the most difficult rule of all for the novice to grasp is the offside rule. When a player hits or rolls the ball in, any other player of the same team who is nearer the opponents' goal-line *at the moment when the ball is hit or rolled in* is offside, unless there be at least three of his opponents nearer to their own goal-line than he is. I give two illustrations to make this quite clear. Of course, it is perfectly clear that if there are three defenders between the attackers and the goal-line it does not matter what position the attackers are in, as they cannot be offside. In Diagram 1 A, B and C are the defenders, and D and E two of the attacking forwards. D has possession of the ball and has tricked A, thus leaving only B and C between him and the goal-line. E, who has been running level with D, gets slightly in front of D as they approach B, and as D passes the ball to E in the direction indicated by the arrow, E is offside, owing to his being nearer his opponents' goal-line than D, the striker, with only two players (B and C) between them and the goal-line. Although D and E may have started from the half-way line and had seven opponents between them and the goal-line at the start, it is just the point of E being in *front* of D at the *final* pass that places him offside.

In Diagram 2 you have the same players and the same mode of play as Diagram 1, but in this case E is just *behind* D when D makes his final pass; and although there are only two opponents between them and the goal-line E is not offside, as D having tricked A is nearer his opponents' goal-line than E when he makes his final pass, and the rule states that no player shall be offside if the ball is last *hit or touched by one of his own team* who is *nearer* the opponents' goal-line than himself. E is thus not offside, as D of his own team was nearer his opponents' goal-line when he hit the ball. It will thus be seen that a fine combined run from one end of the ground to the other may be spoiled at the very last stroke by a player being too anxious, like E in Diagram 1, and it is just the difference of 1yd. that may put a player on or offside.

In conclusion, I would urge all young players to see one or two first-class games if possible, and study the different methods employed by the leading players, and model their play accordingly.

THE END

THE LOST EXPLORER

A THRILLING TALE OF ADVENTURE IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH

By John Mackie

Author of "The Heart of the Prairie," "The Rising of the Red Man," "Black Man's Rock," "In Search of Smith," etc., etc.

Illustrated by John de Walton

FOR NEW READERS

ERIC JARDINE, the hero and narrator of the tale, has accompanied his uncle, Dick Jardine, into the wild unknown country of Tropical Australia, ostensibly to take up new land for grazing purposes, but in reality to search for Dr. Ludwig Leichardt, who disappeared with a large party when attempting to cross Australia from east to west some forty years previously. Although the Government had offered thousands of pounds to anyone who would clear up the mystery of his fate, no traces of the vanished party had ever come to light. Under the protection of Eric's party is a little native, Nick, whom the savages are very anxious to recover. Nick, however, pleads not to be given back to them.

The party falls into an ambush prepared by a cunning and powerful savage named Possum, and Eric Jardine and his friend Maskey are captured and taken to the blacks' encampment, but they make their escape. After a further encounter with blacks the party obtain information, by means of threats and promises, as to the whereabouts of Dr. Leichardt, and a few days' travel brings them within distant sight of their goal—a mountain in the desert, where the long-lost explorer is kept a prisoner by savages.

CHAPTER XXX

THE ROCK AT LAST

AT noon we came to, and passed, a most striking natural object. It was a gigantic monolith, a lonely pillar of sandstone some three hundred feet in height. It was the knob which the rarefied air of the desert had enabled us to see such a long way off. All around were scattered portions of other columns which time had succeeded in reducing to inconsiderable masses. The origin of that solitary giant sentinel to the desert puzzled me. I asked Dick Jardine how it came to be there.

"It's a splendid example of the forces of erosion," was the reply. "'Little drops of water, little grains of sand,' have achieved mighty things here. The top of that column probably marks the old-time level of this part of the country. But subsidence, the action of water, and more particularly the continual action of incalculable grains of sand blowing against this rock, have gradually worn it down to its present shape. Just examine its surface, and you'll see the truth of this."

The explanation was one of such vast significance that I could find no words to express my astonishment.

We drew up in the shade of that great column. It must have been over three hundred feet high, and thirty feet or so in diameter. It was fairly round, and was slightly inclined to the south side—that which we gathered under to escape from the fierce rays of the sun. It was a cool and grateful shade after the glare of the desert. The full force and beauty of that metaphor, "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," can only be thoroughly under-

stood and appreciated by those who have travelled in tropical waste places.

"What a splendid landmark and name-place this must be for the blacks!" observed Dick Jardine. "But there are a good many more like it on this island-continent—Eyre's Rock, for instance."

After our mid-day meal we pushed on again, and had not travelled more than a few miles when, on crossing a slight rise, Yarry, who happened to be abreast of Dick Jardine and myself, driving the horses, pointed to the south, and sang out:—

"Big fellow mountain sit down there."

We wondered why we had not seen it before. Only that the somewhat lower ground over which we had been travelling had interfered with our view, we would have seen it. It rose sheer up in the air to a considerable height, a great grey mass, somewhat resembling in outline a tree-stump that had been sawn across a few feet from the ground. As I have said, what was practically a great billow of sand had hitherto prevented us seeing it. Now, however, it stood boldly out, an imposing and commanding object. Instinctively we reined up to look at it. For the minute my uncle was obviously too much impressed to speak. It was not for me to give expression to some commonplace remark. I felt the occasion was one the importance of which was far beyond my poor powers of expression. We at last beheld the goal for which we had been toiling, facing dangers, and steadily pursuing for long, weary months.

"At last!" said my uncle. And these were his only words. I noticed he removed his hat, and that there was a far-away yet intense look in his eyes as he gazed upon that mountain. It seemed to me that his lips moved. I did not disturb that significant silence.

In a minute or two more, when the wagon came up, my uncle shook his bridle-rein and nodded to me to come on. Needless to say, Maskey, Hume, and White, the off-sider, were more or less excited. Snowball and Yarry, as became superior black fellows, took the matter with a show of indifference that was funny, to say the least about it. A few hours later, perhaps, when they were where we could not see them, they would let themselves go and indulge in fantastic elation bordering on the hysterical. In the meantime, they had their dignity as black men to maintain. Such is the Australian black fellow, one of the most primitive beings on the face of the earth, and what we ourselves doubtless resembled ages before we began to record our upward progress in stone, and on leaves of papyrus.

"We will push on," said Dick Jardine. "On this side that mountain there is an oasis, which, of course, we can't see from here. We must make it for the sake of the horses."

"I suppose the blacks will sight us long before we get there," I observed.

"They doubtless know we are coming now. Savages have many ways of communicating with one another that are almost as effectual as heliographs and wireless telegraphy. There are some signals, for instance—and, by the way, we had practical illustration of that previous to you and Maskey being captured by the blacks—and letter-sticks, and other things I can't go into now."

We kept steadily on for the next three or four hours, and all the time the mountain increased in bulk, until it assumed immense proportions. It resembled a colossal pillar broken off some little distance from the base. It was at least a thousand feet in height. On the far side of it, as Dick Jardine explained, there was a path in the form of a cavern that led up into it. It had doubtless been a flaw in the rock ages ago, and the action of water, with doubtless some help from human hands, had converted it into what it now was, a means of communication between the level and the top of the great column.

When we got within three or four miles of the rock the desert sand gave place to turf and herbage. Then there came a tree or two, then more trees, until to our surprise we were soon travelling through a park-like domain which seemed to us beautiful beyond compare after what we had been passing through. Moreover, there were palms and magnificent trees the like of which some of us had not seen before. It was, indeed, an oasis in the desert. Still, our chief thoughts just then were of another nature than that of our surroundings. We wondered if we were on the threshold of the mystery that had baffled a continent for thirty or forty years—the mystery of Leichardt's fate.

"Hello!" exclaimed my uncle, suddenly, as we rode slightly in advance of the wagon. "Here come the blacks. I was wondering why they hadn't shown up before."

They came streaming along a species of broad avenue to meet us, that great mob of blacks of all ages and sexes. In this they were utterly unlike all other blacks we had known, who either fought shy of us or attacked us boldly.

"I was wondering where on earth they were,"

said Dick Jardine. "They evidently have all been attending a meeting, probably on top of the mountain. Something of importance must have been taking place."

"Are they to be trusted?" I asked. "We are such a handful, and there are hundreds upon hundreds of them."

"If they meant mischief they would hardly show up in such a fashion. Besides, I've been amongst them before, and there is the big Queen, who, although her personality is enough to strike terror into the most intrepid, is, I flatter myself, not exactly prejudiced against us."

"Then you think her appearance is her most formidable characteristic?" I asked.

"It's formidable enough, and I fancy she wouldn't belie her appearance if called upon to assert herself, but she's figuratively head and shoulders above her subjects in intelligence. I also think she realises that that fellow Possum is a dangerous menace to her authority, and it will suit her book best to make allies of us."

"But Possum, with what followers remain to him, is somewhere behind in the desert. And, you see, he didn't secure Nick, and we have him here."

"You don't know the cunning of these savages," said Dick Jardine. "If I'm not greatly mistaken, Possum has passed us in the night, and has already seen the King and Queen, and told them that he found us in the desert, and forced us to come on with young Nick. You can rest assured he has had the first say, and has made the most of it. But let us keep all together. I hope Her Majesty will soon appear. She will prove our best safeguard, I fancy."

I honestly admit I was not a little apprehensive riding into that stronghold of blacks. I had no idea there was any place in Australia where the blacks were so numerous. Moreover, an astonishing feature to me was that these savages cultivated the soil in places, and had fruits, pumpkins, and melons. I had always understood that the tribes of the interior, like all the other tribes, roamed about in small bands digging for roots, groping in the lagoons for mussels, hunting, and, at most, constructing fisheries, as we had already seen them do in the neighbourhood of the gulf. The signs of regular and methodical work around me, therefore, came in the nature of a surprise.

By this time hundreds of men, women, and children were travelling alongside and keeping pace with us. They did not crowd upon us, but kept at a distance of a few paces shouting and talking. They were evidently in a state of considerable excitement. My uncle had taken the precaution of hiding Nick under the tarpaulin on top of the load, so that his whereabouts were not as yet known. Dick Jardine did not wait to exchange words with anyone. It was the Queen who mattered.

"Here is someone of importance coming," I said. "Here is the Queen—it must be she."

Even at a distance of a couple of hundred yards there could be no mistaking her. A fresh mob of blacks was coming towards us, and in their midst, towering head and shoulders above them, was the tallest human being I had ever seen in my life. Even at that distance her extraordinary headgear, which put me in mind of the fantastically decorated arbour of the bower-bird, struck something almost akin to dismay into my heart. It was with no little excitement that I watched her approach.

When she was within fifty paces of us my uncle ordered the team to stop, and himself rode forward a few paces. The mob opened up to right and left, and the immense woman, with a grizzled-haired warrior, advanced to meet us.

One could not exactly describe her as plain, for she had a good strong face—the face of one whose environment does not permit of sentiment. She was a born ruler, one whose word was law, and who never allowed it to be gainsaid, yet who was not altogether devoid of a capacity to perform a generous deed on occasion. She had, moreover, with all her obvious shrewdness, a sense of humour. When she saw my uncle her face relaxed somewhat. She cried:—

"Ho, you of the mighty voice, and the beard that is thick as the mass of lilies on the bosom of the lagoon, what brings you here again?"

Taking off his hat, my uncle bowed low; then, throwing back his head, he indulged in one of those full-throated laughs that startled one by reason of their sonorous unexpectedness. The moment he did so the blacks retreated in consternation.

"Be careful, O mighty voice!" cried the huge woman. "It seems to me you have still that shell in your throat that frightened my people last time you were here. Tell us when you are going to trumpet in that fashion again, so that we may put something in our ears to deaden the sound. But tell us, what has brought you hither?"

"If I were talking to some of your people I would talk all round the truth," was the reply. "But it is a long story, and those horses of mine, which some of your people seem to think are good to eat, want grass and water. I must

see to them first. Have a space cleared for me and them, O Queen; tell your people they must not come within a certain distance, nor attempt to molest them, and I will talk to you. Yea, I have much to tell you, and something to show you that will make glad your heart. But before we begin, where is the old white man, Ludwig Leichardt, whom you keep a prisoner in your midst? I have someone with me whom I am going to give you in exchange for him. No other than Para, the Bandicoot."

At this a great shout went up from those who were around.

"Para, Para!" they shouted. "Where is Para?"

"Hush!" cried the Queen, glancing at the crowd. "Cease your silly noise. This is my affair. I will not have you shouting like so many children."

The effect was magical.

"Yea," said the Queen, turning again to my uncle. "You came here because you had to come. Possum arrived last night, and told me how you stole Para, and how he went after you into the desert, and would have utterly wiped you out, only he made you promise to come right on here and deliver the boy to us. Is not that so?"

I thought Dick Jardine would have had a fit at this fresh demonstration of the Prime Minister's perfidy. He tried to speak, but could only mumble incoherently. His expression was the embodiment of outraged dignity. At last he found his voice.

"You know better than that, O Queen! I can see by your face you do not believe what that fellow Possum says. He is playing a double game; he meant to kill the Bandicoot——"

"Hush!" interrupted the Queen. "No need to tell the people that just now. We'll let them know soon enough. I must, however, see to your camp first, and afterwards we will talk. Here is splendid grass round the banks of this lagoon. Your horses can rest here. And here comes Possum himself. Tell that man of yours to keep his hand off that gun of his. There must be no settling of old scores here."

"Maskey," said my uncle, "and you, Hume, just keep yourselves in hand! Here comes our old enemy. Remember, our safety lies in your discretion. Our friend the Queen here will help us to deal with him at the proper time. It's a bit of a trial to look on that blackleg without attempting to kill him, but it must not be. At least, not just yet."

CHAPTER XXXI

POSSUM IS BROUGHT TO BOOK

THE arch villain, Possum, like most unscrupulous adventurers, was an adept in the great game of bluff. He did not show the slightest degree of fear. He knew that any attack upon himself just then would only revert upon ourselves. Rather, he seemed to deprecate the circumstances that brought him, a modest and self-respecting man, even momentarily into undue prominence. Still, he was prepared to speak the truth. What militated, however, against his virtuous *rôle* was his battered face. He resembled a very badly damaged prize-fighter.

Possum had been pushed to the front by the crowd, and seeing that he must needs make good recent statements, proceeded to do so in a manner that certainly did his reputation credit. While he was doing so the Queen never once took her eyes off his face. It was obvious that this huge black woman was the one person who stood in the way of the scheming minister's ambitions. It was also obvious that Possum was regarded by her as a very dangerous element both socially and politically in the life of her people. The pressing question was, which of those two strong ones was going to prove the stronger? We all stood around, attentive and expectant.

"Ah, Possum," said the Queen. "So you have brought Para, the Bandicoot, back to us! But where is he? We are all dying to see him again."

"He is here, O Queen! In the thing that goes on wheels will ye find him. I found Big Voice in the desert making off towards the rising sun, but I prevailed on him—by the strength of my good right arm, I admit—to proceed thither and restore him to you. It is an iniquitous thing to think, O Queen, that this wretched white man and his kind should have caused us such heaviness of heart—such apprehension lest that dear child who will one day rule over us might be lost to us for ever."

Possum spread out his fat hands, lifted his eyes dramatically to the skies, and spoke with a quiver in his voice.

"Ah, how grateful Para must be to you, Possum! Unfortunately there are amongst us suspicious ones who say they know strange things of you in the past, and they are not

inclined to take you at your word. If the Bandicoot, therefore, bears out what you say the King here will publicly apologise for having doubted you. Again, should Para prove your words to be untrue—well, we shall see what we shall see."

"Your Majesty," said Dick Jardine at this point, "this man you call Possum is an out-and-out fraud. He left Para, the Bandicoot, in the wilderness that he might die, but I picked him up. On several occasions he tried to get at him and kill him, but each time his purpose was defeated. Look at his face; it bears the traces of what this gentleman here gave him when he was detected trying to steal or kill Para. It was you who shifted the position of Possum's features somewhat — wasn't it, Hume?"

"It was," said Hume, pursing his lips, and looking in a curiously concentrated fashion at the object of our conversation. "Aye, an' if Her Majesty will allow me, I'll show her how I did it. I can do no fairer than that."

The big black Queen regarded Hume in a pleased and speculative manner. Turning to my uncle, she said:—

"His offer is a fair and sporting one. If Para disproves Possum's words, then shall Possum and this man fight."

"Thank you, Your Majesty," said Hume, with eyes fairly dancing in his head. "I've been simply deein' to gie the chiel his change. Shall we start in, if it please Your Majesty?"

Hume was very polite when he had any request to make.

"Tell that man to restrain himself, O Big Voice," said the Queen hastily to my uncle. "I do not exactly understand his speech, but it seems to me full of strong medicine. Before we proceed, produce Para."

But Para had produced himself. He had somehow crawled into an empty flour-sack on top of the load, and being possessed, as has already been said, of a sense of humour, had rubbed the remaining flour into his hair and skin in a highly successful fashion. Hearing the voices of friends he now crawled out, and stood on top of the load, a proud example of how a black boy can become a white one.

A hoarse roar of wonder and welcome went up from the assembled blacks when they saw Nick. Despite his playful disguise—a ruse on his part they evidently were not accustomed to—they crowded round the wagon, and hailed him with acclamation. But Dick Jardine silenced them by shouting in a voice so loud and penetrating that they instinctively shrank back. The big Queen looked at him resentfully, and placed both fingers in her ears.

"I apologise, madam," said my uncle; "but let us hear what Para has to say concerning his worthy countryman Possum. Perhaps if you questioned him yourself it would be fairer, and more satisfactory."

"That is so," observed the Queen. "But, Possum, what do you mean by making faces at the Bandicoot like that? You are not trying to influence his speech, are you?"

Possum had undoubtedly been trying to intimidate the youngster by an extraordinary facial pantomime which Nick not only failed to understand, but which he seemed to resent. The wily Prime Minister, aware that he had been detected at his little games, quickly changed a frown and a shake of the head into what was doubtless intended to be a propitiatory smile. It was, however, so suggestive of the crocodile that the little fellow regarded him with terror, and looked as if he were about to break into a howl.

"Now, Para," said the Queen, thoughtfully, "is it true that our worthy friend and kinsman, Possum, has been endeavouring to recapture you from this wicked man with the loud voice and the big beard, in order that he should restore you to us? Shall we now hand you over to Possum to look after you?"

Nick's only reply to this alarming proposal was to leap boldly from the wagon, and make a rush for Dick Jardine. The little fellow threw his arms round one of my uncle's legs, and clung to it in a frenzied fashion. It was obvious that he objected to being separated from him.

"That fellow Possum wantum killum me," he cried. "This big man all-a-same daddy belonging to me."

"Possum," said the Queen, turning to that gentleman, who stood quite near with an admirable assumption of injured innocence and dignity, "I am afraid your notions regarding the truth are as peculiar as ever. You will remain where you are until we inquire further into this matter. I think it is quite possible that we may reward your integrity by handing you over to our dear sister, the Shrew, who has long desired you as a helpmate. She told me only the other day she desired a strong, broad-shouldered man who would mind the nets, dig for yams, and carry the household goods about on his back when she shifts camp. I

"Shall we now hand you over to Possum to look after you?" the Queen asked the little fellow. Nick's reply to this alarming proposal was to rush to my uncle and throw his arms around that great man's leg. "That fellow Possum want to kill me!" he cried.

think you would just suit. What do you think, O Big Voice?"

"I think, O Queen," said Dick Jardine, "that Possum deserves his fate. I mean that if he is not filled with gratitude to you for your extreme clemency he ought to be. But, goodness! what is the matter with the man?"

It looked as if the arch-villain Possum was about to have a fit. At the mention of the alarming prospect which the big Queen had advocated, his truculent manner had undergone a remarkable change. His limbs seemed to become limp, and abject terror showed on his face.

Just then there was a commotion in a distant part of the crowd. It was evident someone of importance was approaching. The people made way, heralding by many covert witticisms and ironical remarks she who was called the Shrew, and who came boldly to the front. She was a tall and formidable-looking Amazon, obviously possessed of considerable truculence and physical prowess. Although no longer young, she had evidently established such a reputation for managing her own affairs—and those of other people whom chance threw in her way—that few dared or cared to resent her openly. She carried a short club in one hand, which she occasionally used to enforce her wishes. The Queen was the only one whose presence she seemed to respect. Possum did not seem desirous of meeting her eye.

"Look out!" cried Hume. "Possum's going to make a bolt for it."

But the deposed minister was too late. Two or three women, who had also noted the elusive one's covert movements, promptly blocked his way, and pushed him in the direction of the Shrew.

"Take him, O Shrew, he is yours," said the big Queen, "and I wish you joy of your treasure. He has been playing fast and loose in affairs of State, and as the men of our people do not seem able to restrain him, it is necessary that a woman such as you take him in hand."

"Aha!" exclaimed the Shrew, as her one eye scanned the fearful man malevolently, "and so, Possum, we meet again! It is some little time since we met; but I do not forget how you lied to me to achieve your ends. And you would now insult me openly by trying to flee from me. Bah! such base ingratitude wants checking promptly. Take that—and that!"

And to the unbounded delight of the crowd, the Shrew promptly proceeded to chastise the shirker. Possum so far forgot himself as to attempt some feeble resistance, and this only succeeded in bring further ignominy upon him. The Shrew called sharply to some attendants, who promptly brought together a load of firewood, and this was placed on Possum's back. Then, at a sharp word of command, the discomfited villain was marched off, muttering strangely to himself, and running the gauntlet of merciless raillery from those whom he had long been duping and oppressing.

When the tumult consequent on the ignominious removal of Possum had subsided, I asked my uncle what about the captive white man, Dr. Leichardt. Not a word had yet been said about him.

"We're coming to that now," said my uncle. "With savage people, and some civilised nations for the matter of that, you've got to skate all round the real object of your mission first. But the Queen looks as if she was going to introduce the subject herself."

"And now, O Big Voice," said the Queen, "what has brought you hither? Was it really that your desire to see me again was too much for you?"

"That is a matter, O Queen, which I do not wish to talk of before so many. What I think of you is a matter too sacred to be spoken of before the common crowd. What I would like to talk about concerns a countryman of my own, the old white man, Dr. Leichardt, whom you call Wah-to-mah—the man who looks at things—and who has lived in the neighbourhood of this rock for many years. Lead me to him, O Queen, for I would fain speak with him."

As my uncle spoke the face of the Queen had become very grave indeed, and I also noticed that those who listened to him also ceased talking amongst themselves, and shook their heads. The big woman paused for a minute before speaking, as if weighing some important point. Then she seemed to make up her mind, and, with a sudden gesture, said:—

"Yes, I will take you to see your aged countryman, Wah-to-mah. He lies sick nigh unto death on top of the great rock. It is only right that some of his own people should see him, for they may have some magic that the black man knows not of. Leave two men here, one to look after your horses, and the other to look after the thing that goes on wheels, and I will lead you and the others to him. Be quick, for I fear that time is precious. You can trust me, can't you, Big Beard?"

"I do trust you, O Queen;" said Dick Jardine. "It is those whose tongues drip oil and honey

that I fear. Let us unhitch right here. There is good grass and water. White, you and Hume and the black boys can stay behind and see to things. You will have another opportunity of seeing the top of the rock. Eric and Maskey, hobble out your horses, and let us accompany Her Majesty."

CHAPTER XXXII

WE MEET LEICHARDT

OUR arrangements were soon completed, and my uncle, Maskey, and myself set out on foot to that part of the rock which led to the top. The King and Queen and some half-dozen others accompanied us. The first-named gave strict orders to the blacks to keep away from the wagon and the horses. He also advised my uncle to give instructions to those whom he had left behind in charge to keep strictly to themselves, and not to attempt any communication with the blacks. That, he said, might only lead to misunderstanding and trouble. Hume could be relied upon to see to this. We took Maskey with us, simply because there would be less danger of him offending the savages by his brusque ways while there was someone to act as a check upon him.

"Most whites would tell us it is an extremely risky thing trusting to those blacks," observed my uncle. "But, despite her sledge-hammer ways, I must confess that big woman inspires confidence. Besides, we've got our firearms, and they have made no stipulation about them, which in itself is a favourable symptom. Look at these mia-mias, or huts. How splendidly made they are—shaped and woven as I've seen those of the Basutos in South Africa!"

Dick Jardine during his wandering career had been pretty well all over the world. Therefore his sense of comparison was always interesting and illuminating. There were few things we met with on our journey that he did not invest with a new interest for us.

It was an extraordinary procession that set out to ascend the great rock. How we were to do it was a mystery to me. It seemed to rise to a height of several hundred feet sheer into the air, and there was no visible means of scaling it.

"What a thickly populated district this is!" I remarked to Dick Jardine. "Look, there are long lines of mia-mias laid out like streets. I wonder if they support themselves solely by what they grow? They must have killed off all the game in this neighbourhood long ago."

"There is a large lake hard by that simply swarms with fish. And they till the soil, as you see. Now, people will tell you that there is not in all Australia one single indigenous tree or plant that is capable of improvement by cultivation. That is quite true; but, as you see, they grow many fruits and vegetables here that are known to us in other parts of Australia. What inference do you draw from that?"

"The old white man whom we are now going to see has taught them these things. When Dr. Leichardt was captured by the blacks he must have had seeds in his possession. He has employed himself during his captivity by teaching them how to grow them, and how to irrigate. One sees the methods they employ down south everywhere."

"Yes, I don't think there can be any mistake about it, Eric. But the chances are that when we go back to civilisation—I'm presuming we'll get back somehow—they'll bracket us with Munchausen."

While we were talking the great black Queen and her silent spouse came up. Maskey was evidently too much astonished at what he saw to attempt an expression of his thoughts. He had, like many Australian bushmen, told so many yarns in his time that now, when something which was really more wonderful than anything he had romanced about was before his eyes, he refused to credit the evidence of his own senses. I could see he was in doubt as to whether he was really awake, but his innate conceit would not permit him to acknowledge the fact.

It was evident that the bulk of the population was settled on the level at the foot of the rock. Already we were very curious to know who lived on top, and what it was like. To us it looked like a species of capitol.

At last we reached a narrow defile that led into the rock and upwards. It resembled a great split which the action of water had worn away during the centuries. Rudely hewn steps led upwards. At the entrance to this defile some half-dozen blacks were stationed. They were armed with spears and shields, and obviously acted as sentries. They had been lolling about hardening spear-heads over tiny fires, but at our approach they sprang to their feet and surveyed us critically. A word from the King, and they fell back.

Then began one of the most remarkable climbs I ever had in my experience. I think that really

the stairs were more tiring than those parts of the narrow defile which simply sloped. At times the rock met over our heads. At one spot, indeed, a tunnel seemed to have been cut through to another defile, for when we momentarily emerged into the subdued light, we caught sight of a stupendous ravine, and human beings moving about far below. Higher up still we came out upon a species of terrace that skirted the face of the rock, and a most magnificent prospect opened out before us. The country resembled a great coloured map. In the immediate neighbourhood of the rock were numerous green fields and cultivated patches, lined with what resembled tiny footpaths, but which the Queen assured us were really wide roads that the old white man had planned and laid out years before. Moreover, the whole settlement was so arranged that there was practically a cordon of blacks surrounding the rock and the inhabited district. No enemy could approach without being seen and the alarm being given. A great lake gleaming like molten silver opened out to the south. Canals had been cut from it through the fields and plantations, and it was obvious that irrigation was one of the principal factors in the agricultural economy of the country. Numerous sails dotted the surface of the lake; and outside this great circular band of green that denoted the habitable and cultivated country lay the grey desert, as ghostly a setting as one could well imagine. No wonder the white man had been unable to penetrate to this oasis. Who, indeed, would have dreamt of meeting with such a well-ordered and beautiful country in the centre of Australia! We could see many fine buildings. What my uncle declared were banana and orange groves and fields of pineapple lay to the south in the neighbourhood of the lake. At one spot, which, of course, we had not visited, there was a regular township, the buildings having been all erected on the Eastern plan. I was so astonished at what I saw, and impressed with the significance of it all, that I could not find words to express myself. The whole fair scene aroused thoughts that words could hardly express. As for my companions—with the exception of my uncle—their eyes were fairly starting from their heads with astonishment. Even Maskey was silent.

"You are marvelling at what one white man has been able to do in the wilderness, and working with savages?" said my uncle to me.

"Yes," I replied. "If Dr. Leichardt has been kept a prisoner by these savages for nearly forty years it has been a great thing for them. The whole country is a monument to him."

"That is so, Eric," said Dick Jardine. "And not only has one white man changed the face of the country—for before he came I presume the land round this rock was only a spinifex waste—but he has changed a miserable, wandering tribe into a prosperous and happy people. It was the old white man who brought with him the first exotic seeds. It was he who taught them how to frame their laws for the common good. It was he who taught them how to irrigate, and how to live in accordance with the laws of health and a higher form of life than that which they had been accustomed to."

We rubbed our eyes with astonishment when suddenly we came out upon the great flat mountain top. It was simply a circular plateau several acres in extent. Some huge and peculiarly shaped boulders were set up at intervals, and facing the east was an orthodox, slab-built hut with a bark roof, such as one might see in any part of Australia. It was covered with vines, with numerous evergreen shrubs in its immediate vicinity. Two windows and a door faced the east, and under the typical verandah was a bench. The windows were open and innocent of glass. A couple of black men sat on the ground just outside the open door, where they could watch someone who was evidently inside.

A row of stone huts, cemented by the ready-made mortar which ant-beds provide, stood at some little distance from the log house. On a little rise a tall stone was raised which bore on its face something that resembled a sundial. In one place were ranged several circular buildings neatly thatched with long grass, which suggested them being used as store-houses in the event of a flood or siege. They reminded me of pictures I had seen of old Martello towers, or block-houses. But perhaps the most peculiar and striking object that met the eye was the axle of a dray or wagon which was laid on a table of stone in a prominent place in front of the hut.

"I wonder how on earth that axle got there?" exclaimed Dick Jardine. "Can it be a Leichardt relic—one of the traces of the lost party which the Government has been asking and searching for all these years in vain?"

A number of blacks appeared as we approached the hut, but the Queen simply raised a hand and they retired. If these blacks—as they must have been—were interested in the approach of

the white strangers, they at least showed a remarkable degree of consideration and restraint. As Maskey remarked to me, it was evident that this circular plateau was the capitol or royal residence of the Yuculas. There was no particular pretension or architectural style displayed in the buildings. They were all business-like and meant for use. Still, in their very simplicity they possessed a dignity. The vast and varied outlook which this little tableland afforded was doubtless as significant and unique as anything to be found in the southern hemisphere. In a long open shed was a species of carpenter's shop in which were many objects fashioned on European lines.

I will never forget my feelings at the moment when the old chief and the Queen, leading us to within a few yards of the side of the log hut, motioned us to remain where we were while they entered to prepare the old white man for our approach.

"He has been already told that you are coming," said the Queen; "but I must go and prepare him still further. He is weak, and the shock might be too much for him."

They disappeared through the open doorway, and we stood silent, gazing around upon the strange scene. What my uncle's thoughts were at that moment I could only guess. It had been his theory for many long years that the long-lost explorer, Dr. Ludwig Leichardt, was still alive, and a prisoner with the wild blacks of the interior; and because he held to this theory people had laughed at him and called him a romancer. Now he stood outside the hut where that old white man lived, whose actual existence was considered a myth by the civilised world. Within the next few minutes he would, in the presence of witnesses, be able to prove and establish his identity. This would clear up the greatest mystery of modern exploration — the fate of Dr. Ludwig Leichardt and his party of eight persons all told who started to cross Australia from east to west in 1848, and were never heard of again.

On a low bedstead lay a white man, very old indeed, and very thin. "Who are you, and why do you come here?" he asked.

Though we could have only stood outside that hut for a brief few minutes, such was the import of the situation that it seemed to me I had been standing there for hours. At last the Queen reappeared in the doorway. She beckoned us to approach. One could learn nothing from her face.

My uncle entered the hut first, I followed, Maskey and one or two blacks brought up the rear.

We stood in a large room with shelves and pegs against the slab-built walls. On a low

bedstead which a man might make for himself in a few hours, and covered with skins and coarse, native-made sacking, a white man lay. He was very old indeed, and his long white beard came low upon his breast. He was very thin, and his skin was like faded parchment. His large grey eyes were unnaturally bright. They seemed to be gazing ahead and into the future. His shirt was woven from native grass, and was innocent of buttons. It was hardly possible to recognise the famous scientist and explorer, Dr. Ludwig Leichardt, judging by early pictures and prints of him, in this patriarchal old man.

But was he the famous Dr. Ludwig Leichardt whom Australia had looked upon as dead for forty years and more? Was this the man whose fame had outlasted his generation? Was this dying man—for one could see at a glance that dying he was—he for whom a Government had offered twenty thousand pounds for the merest trace?

My uncle approached the bed, leant over the old man, and took his hand.

"I am sorry to find you ill," he said. "It was I whom you saw on the terrace about a year ago. I could not get to you then, but I have come back as soon as I could. I have some medicines with me. Is there anything I can do for you?"

One thing I noted was that my uncle left it to the old man to say who he was.

"I am afraid you have only come in time to see me die," replied the greybeard, in a voice that I thought found difficulty in choosing appropriate words to express what he meant to say. "How is it you have been so long in coming to find me? But perhaps you do not know whom it is you are speaking to? I expect your generation has forgotten all about Ludwig Leichardt. Classen, who was my brother-in-law, Hentig, Stuart, Kelly, and the two black boys who were with me, are dead long ago. They were drowned in the great flood that came down from the mountains that night in December, 1848. Who are you, and did you come hither on purpose to find me?"

My uncle got down on his knees by the bedside, and took the hand of the old man in his own. There was something akin to reverence in the way he looked at him, and in the tone of his voice.

"The world has not forgotten you," he said. "For forty years and more Australia has looked for traces of you; but never a sign of your presence or the faintest clue that would lead men to believe you were still alive has been found. The country to the north of this is still unoccupied. Indeed, until recently there were large portions of New South Wales and Queensland unexplored. Settlement has gone on very slowly indeed in Australia in comparison with other countries. The Government offered great rewards for anyone who would bring in authentic tidings of you. I expect, however, that no one thought you would be found so far to the north-west. The last message that was received from you came from McPherson's station on the Cogoon River, and was dated April 3rd, 1848. That place is well within civilisation now."

"Then my adopted country did not leave me to my fate? It sent parties in search of me, and it still remembers me?"

"The name of Dr. Leichardt is a household word in Australia to-day. There is a standing offer from the Government of many thousand pounds to anyone who will find out what became of you. But tell me, is it the fever that has laid you low? I have quinine here if it is."

"I thank you, but I have no need of quinine, and if I had there are berries in the plain beneath that would soon cure me. No, my trouble is old age; but it is hardly a trouble, for I have no pain. It is merely a weakening of my grip on life. As the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb, so is death robbed of its bitterness by the philosophy of age. For years I have felt that I have long since outlived my generation, and the desire to go back to my people and my home has weakened, for I know now that the place I once called home must be in the hands of strangers, and those whom I loved must have passed away. When I heard from those around me about a year ago that a white man was approaching, and when I heard your voice, an old desire that I thought had long been dead awoke within me; but you know what happened then—I was hurried away from you."

"Ah, Wah-to-mah," broke in the Queen, "I am afraid you think too hardly of us! You had become too dear to us for our people to let you go. You forget, Wah-to-mah, that, after we found you, we bore you through a hostile country where, had our enemies found you, they would have killed you. We journeyed thither to this great rock, and here by your help have we built up a kingdom. Before that time we were only wanderers in the wilderness, a handful of starving black people. It was you who made us what we are. But do we weary

you overmuch, Wah-to-mah ? Shall I ask these white people to go now, that you may rest ? Come, let me give you to drink."

And, with a tenderness that I hardly associated with the great, sharp-tongued Queen, she raised the head and shoulders of Dr. Ludwig Leichardt, while my uncle put the gourd which she indicated to his lips.

My uncle alone stayed behind in the house while we others went outside to rest in the shade of a large open shed, and to partake of various kinds of fruits, fish, and vegetables, which the old potentate had ordered for our entertainment. We had gone so long without fresh foods that it is needless to say we thoroughly enjoyed the impromptu banquet. To find oranges, paw-paws, bananas, guavas, melons, pumpkins, fresh-water crayfish, and many other kinds of fish, in that artificially created oasis in the desert, was somethin: so unexpected and foreign to our preconceived notions as to the physical possibilities of the so-called Great Australian Desert, that, despite our efforts to adapt ourselves to our new and unique surroundings, we moved in an atmosphere of unreality.

I was about to hint to the old chief, who was most assiduous in seeing to our comfort, that those we had left behind with the wagon would greatly appreciate a change of diet also, when he told us that he had given orders to his people that our comrades should be well supplied with everything.

After we had finished our meal Maskey and I, accompanied by the chief, made a tour of inspection of the rock and its strange buildings. We never tired looking upon the magnificent panorama our elevated position afforded.

While, with the aid of field-glasses, Maskey and I were watching a procession of boats on the lake away to the south, a low rumble, that I confess startled me considerably, came from the south-west.

"Hello!" exclaimed Maskey. "That's the first thunder I've heard this season. They tell me they've had no rain here for some years. And if that's a sign now of the approach of a wet season, I fancy you'll see some consid'rable little excitement."

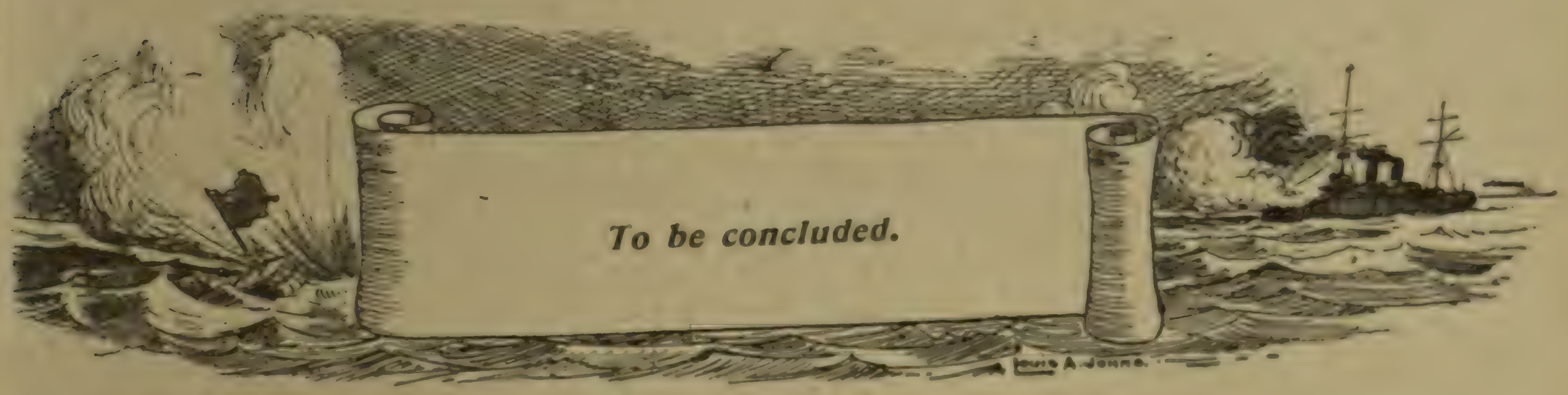
"Yes; I suppose we're out of the belt where they can count upon regular wet seasons, as in the gulf and coast country," I said. "But if it's a wet season, it is surely a little premature."

"Not for the interior, I should say," was the sober reply. "Look, there's a black cloud, 'bout as big as your fist, 'way to the south-west. An' look, there's lightning. My word, just twig them blacks gittin' about!"

And, surely enough, that sudden rumble had caused a most extraordinary stir amongst the aboriginals. In a moment every inhabitant in the settlement was out of doors, and straining his eyes to catch sight of the approaching storm. Then there was a confused Babel of tongues, a vast amount of gesticulation and excitement, and a rush for the plain below. We could see the boats on the great lake turn and make for the shore.

We noticed that some blacks ran to four tall poles erected at the cardinal points of the compass on the edge of the cliff, and hoisted huge squares of coarse cloth, so that they might be seen from the plain beneath. A great fire was also lit in the open, and a series of smoke-rings sent up into the air.

"That's to warn the blacks in the plain who, of course, can't see or hear as we do up here, that they may expect a flood," observed Maskey. "I reckon we'll see some queer sights afore we're much older."



To be concluded.

How to Make a Simple Model Undertype Horizontal Steam Engine

By HENRY GREENLY

FOR many years the writer's favourite type of stationary engine has been that known as the "undertype horizontal engine," in which a boiler of the locomotive type is placed over a specially designed horizontal engine, the two making a complete steam-power unit. This preference has led to the design of several models of this pattern; but in all cases they have been two-cylinder compound engines, and therefore of too complicated a character for the beginner.

The drawings herewith illustrate a much simpler engine of the undertype variety. A single cylinder is employed, which is of the standard type, to be obtained at any model dealers. This, with the purchase of a pressure-gauge, a few unions, a safety valve and stop-valve, should enable the amateur to build up at home a really powerful model which will steam for quite thirty minutes with one charge of water in the boiler.

The steam generator is of the high-pressure, internally fired type. In this kind of loco-type boiler the external portion is simply a shell made in the orthodox shape which encases the boiler proper. This generator is cylindrical, and to promote a vigorous end-to-end circulation two or more water-tubes hang from its under

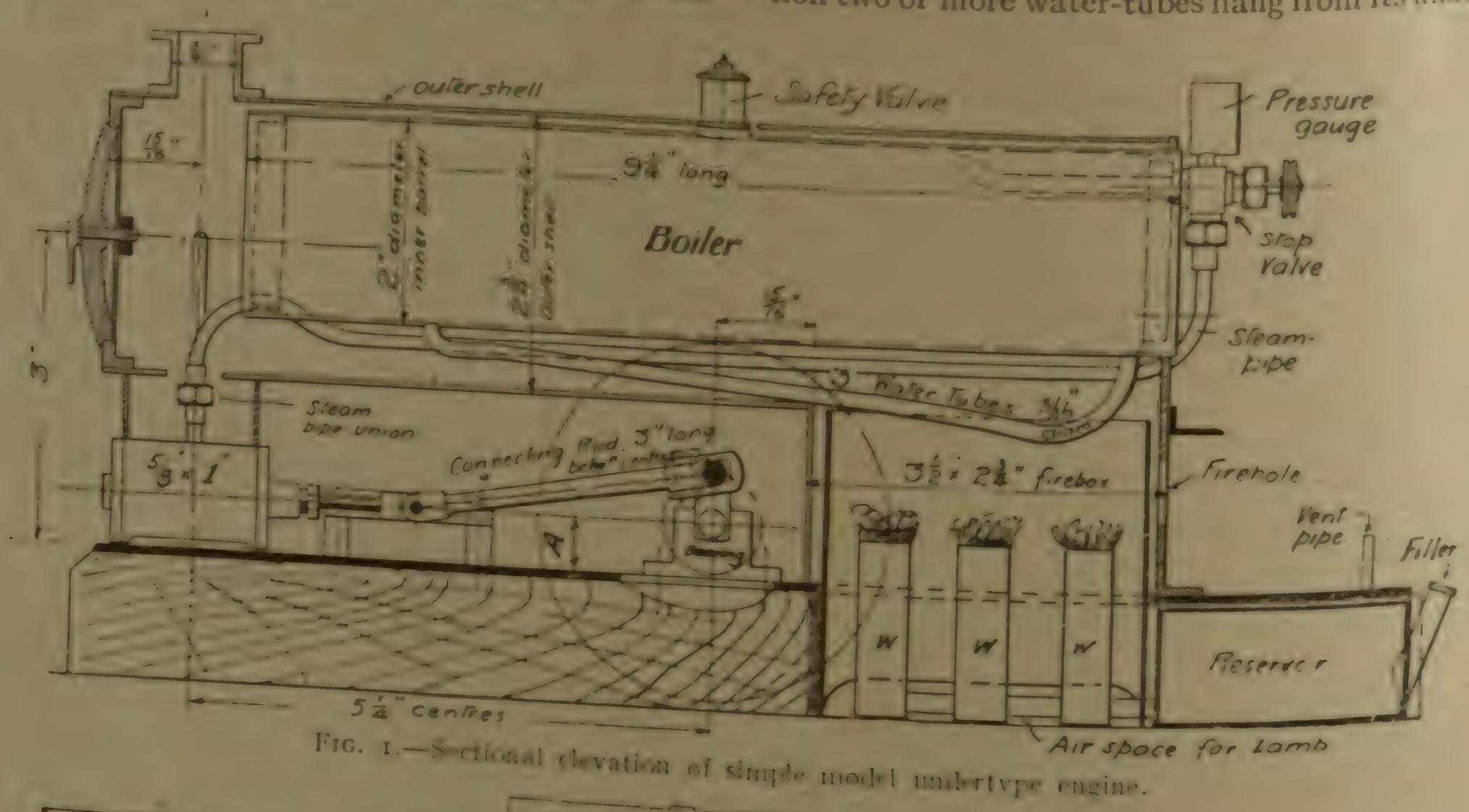


FIG. 1.—Sectional elevation of simple model undertype engine.

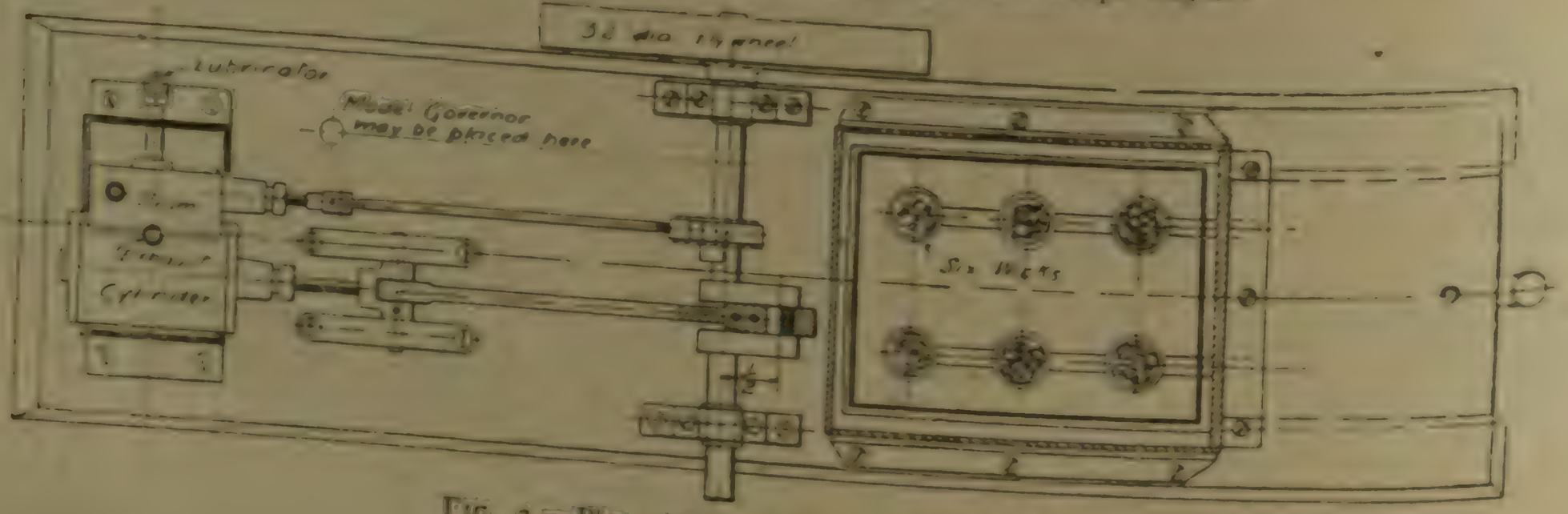


FIG. 2.—Plan view of machinery and firebox.

surface. These water-tubes are inclined and have their lowest ends in the firebox. The use of water-tubes in conjunction with the methylated spirit lamp is ideal. The flame of such a lamp is comparatively very hot, but the products of combustion appear to very soon cool down. Therefore a methylated spirit lamp works much better in a water-tube boiler than in one where there is a firebox with flue-tubes through the boiler leading out into the smoke-box. In such tubes, where ordinary coal-fire is used, a large proportion of the work of generating the steam is accomplished, but with a methylated spirit lamp it is quite a different matter.

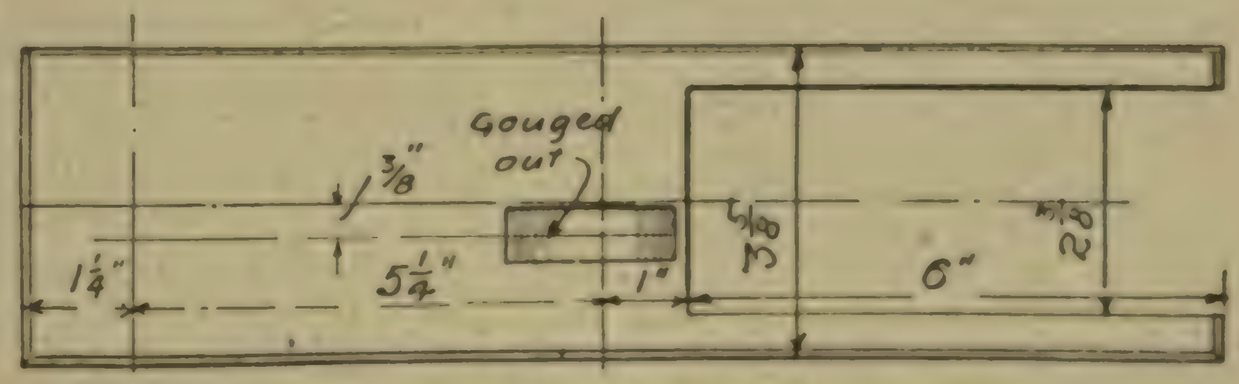


FIG. 3.—Plan of wooden base.

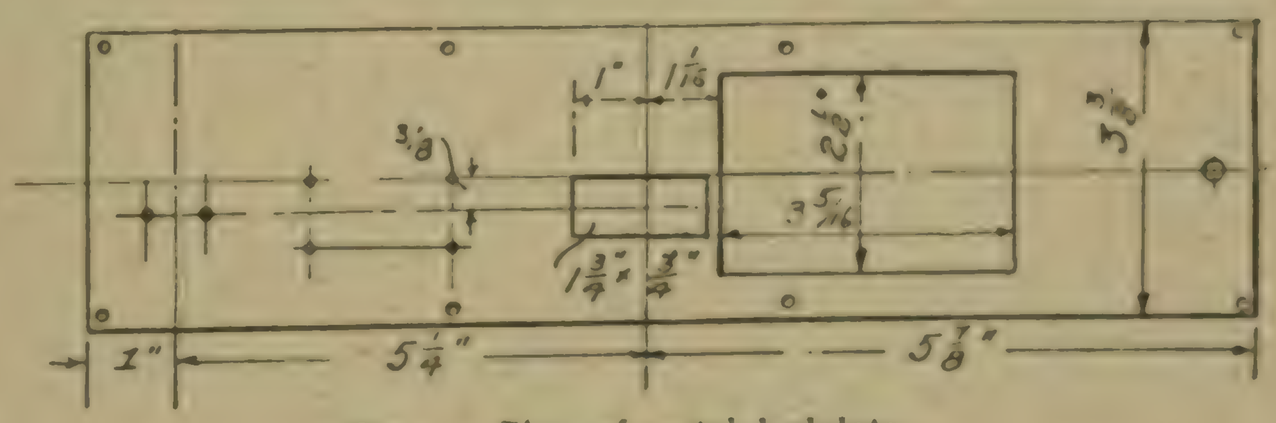


FIG. 4.—Plan of metal bedplate.

In the water-tube boiler the lamp is also better ventilated. This is very important. All the products of combustion and flames pass through the space between the inner barrel (the boiler proper) and the outer shell. The inner barrel is shorter than the outer shell, to form the smoke-box and the proper exit through the chimney, and also to make room for the various pipes to the cylinders.

In the present design the whole of the machinery and boiler are erected on a flat bedplate of iron, steel, or brass plate, either of the first two materials being chosen to reduce the cost. As the flywheel is fairly large this bedplate needs raising. To provide, at the same time, for the lamp, the base is made of wood 1¼" thick, as shown in Fig. 3, the top edge being chamfered off and the whole base painted stone colour to give it the appearance of being a concrete foundation.

To clear the big end of the connecting-rod a portion of the top of the wooden base must be gouged out, as indicated on the drawings. The metal bedplate shown should be a full 1/16" thick—3/32" is better—and be cut out to the shape shown in Fig. 4. This of course will require, in addition to the holes for the fire-box and the smaller ones for the fixing of the cylinder, guide-bars, and bearings, the one over the gouged-out portion of the wooden base to allow the big end to swing clear on the bottom quarter.

The cylinder is a standard one, and is cheaper and much more satisfactory if bought ready finished than if patterns are made and castings obtained in a suitable brass or gun-metal. The size is 5/8" bore by 1¼" stroke, and the steam-chest is on the right-hand side, although this is not essential. As purchased the cylinders are provided with a bearing strip and two screws to fit them directly to the bedplate.

The distance between the horizontal centre line of the cylinder and the surface of the bedplate, marked "A" on all the drawings, depends on the particular cylinder obtained,

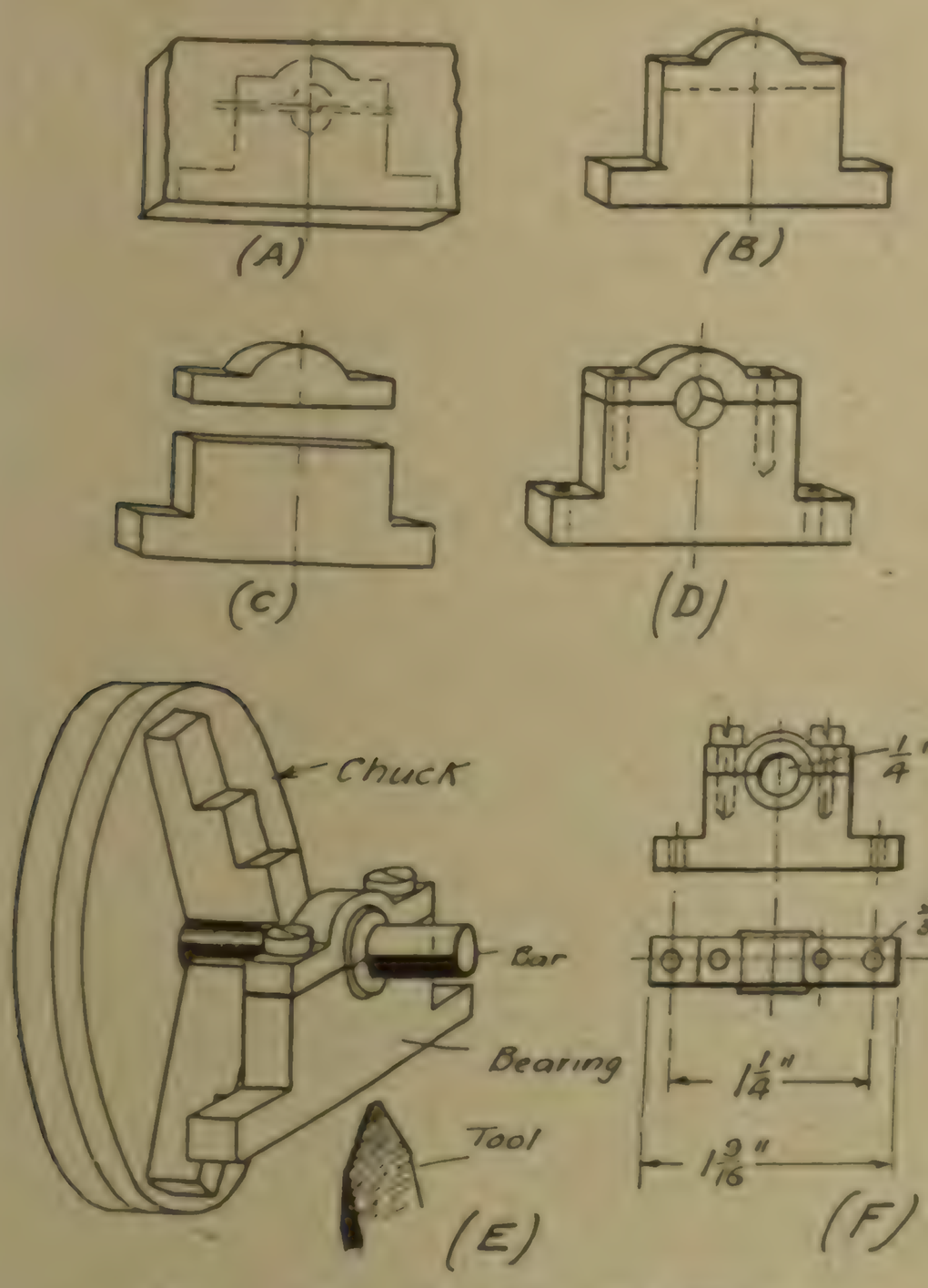


FIG. 5.—The evolution of the bearings.

(A) Marking out on a block of brass. Note allowance for cutting off the cap.
(B) Cut out to rough size.
(C) Cutting off the cap.
(D) Cap soldered on and holes bored.
(E) Facing the sides in the lathe.
(F) The finished bearing.

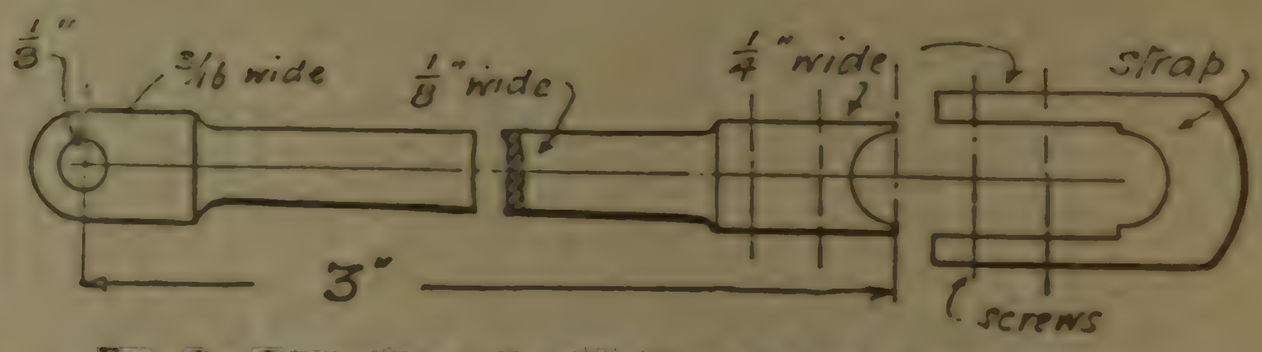


FIG. 6.—Connecting rod, with big-end strap shown separate.

but will be in the neighbourhood of 9/16". Having fixed the cylinder on the bedplate the bearings can be sawn roughly out of block

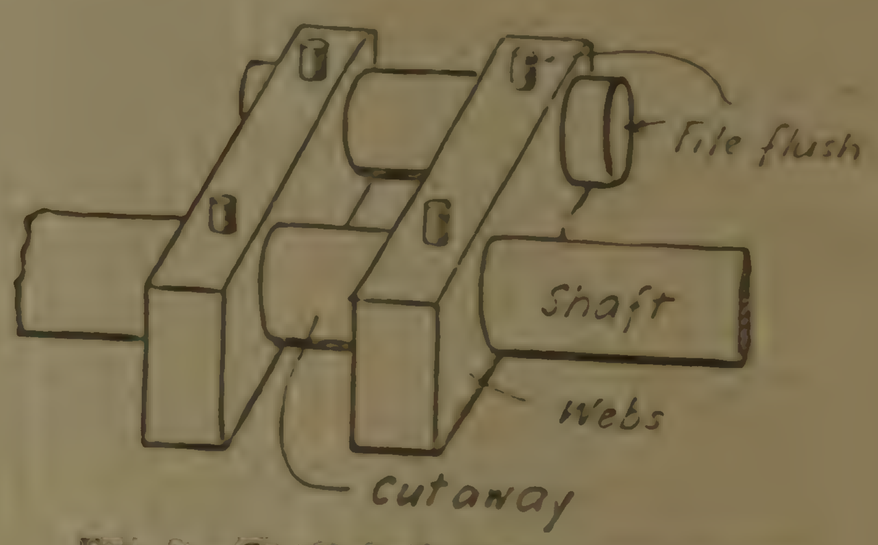


FIG. 7.—Crank-shaft during construction.

brass about 3/8" thick to the shape shown in Fig. 5. When sawn out they are split to form the top and bottom bearings, this being done with a fine hack-saw on a line scribed through the horizontal centre of the bearing. When this is done the joint or cut may be filed flat, and the two parts reunited with soft solder, and exactly on the soldered joint the hole for the journal bearing may be drilled.

Following this the two holes for the holding down screws of the cap may be drilled. These holes are first drilled down to the "clearing size" (*i.e.*, the outside size of the screw) as far as the soldered joint, and then further down with a tapping size of drill. The holes may then be "screwed" with a suitable 3/32" tap. The taper-tap is used first, and then a plug-tap, as the hole is one with a blind end. In using small screw-taps great care must be taken not to force and break them. They do the latter very easily, and if as the tap is being driven any great resistance is offered to further movement, the tap should be turned back and tried again. If necessary it should be screwed right out, and the hole cleared of the chips of metal the cutting of the screw-thread creates. In addition the depth of the hole should be examined to see that the tap has room to work and that the point does not touch the bottom of hole. This is a frequent cause of breakage.

When the taper-tap has been used the plug-tap may be run into the hole to form a complete thread all the way down.

The writer has arranged the drawings of these bearings to show the processes, and the one following fitting the screws holding the cap is the facing of the bearing square with the hole. Although this is not essential it is advisable, and is an interesting process where a lathe is available. The bearing is gripped on a round bar of metal slightly larger than the crank-shaft running in the lathe-chuck, and a cut is taken down each side, leaving a small annular facing on each side for appearance's sake. By this method a much better finish will be obtained than by filing the bearing up to shape. The two bearings may then be placed on the bar side by side, and the feet filed up exactly level and square.

The crank-shaft is another interesting item. This may be built up of raw material. Two

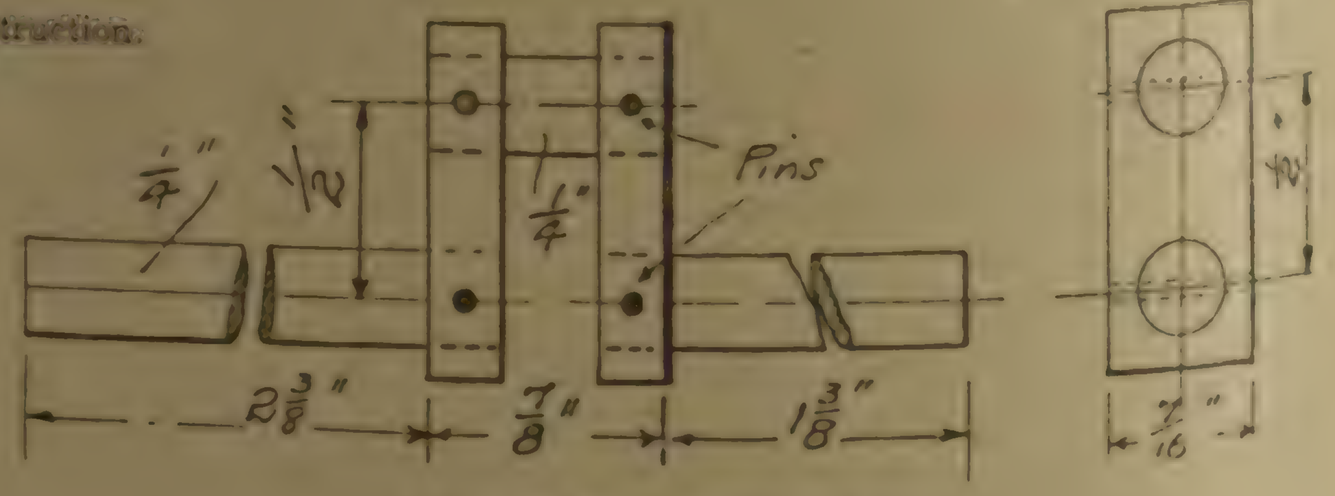
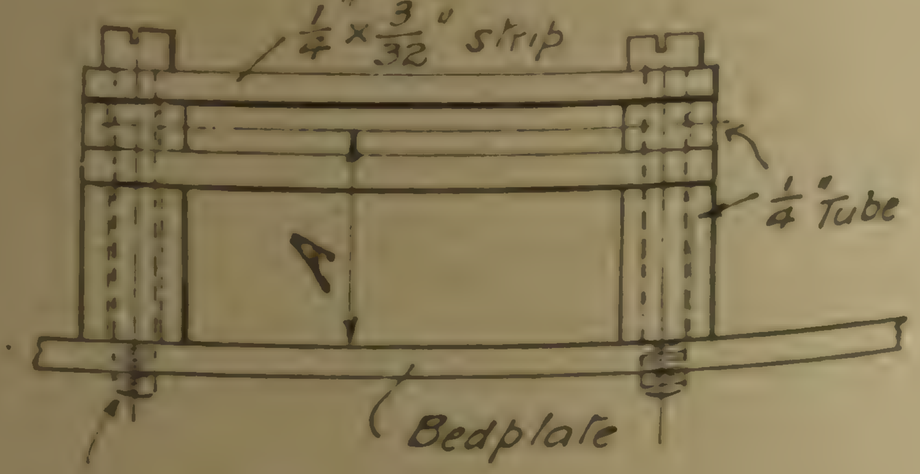


FIG. 8.—Finished crank-shaft.

webs are made up of 7/16" × 3/16" steel bar, and drilled with two holes in each, exactly 1'2" throw, to fit the shaft tightly; the shaft is put on, and the webs placed in the proper



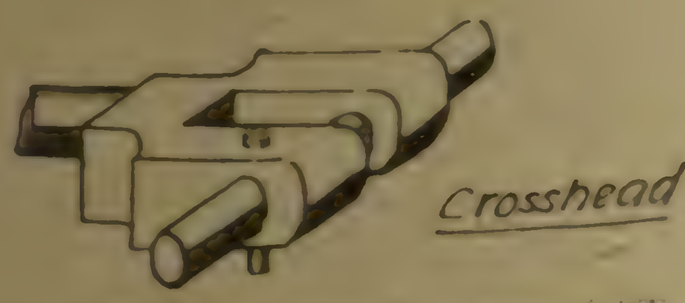


FIG. 9.—Guides and crosshead.

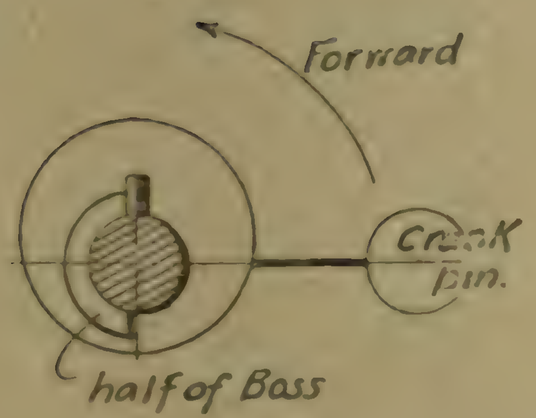


FIG. 10.—Slip eccentric for reversing.

position and 1/4" apart. A small piece of shaft is then put through the other pair of holes, and the parts are soldered and pinned together. The diagram (Fig. 7) shows the state of the shaft at this point in the operations, and Fig. 8 the finished shaft after the middle portion of the shaft and all projecting parts have been cut and filed off.

If accurately marked out and drilled—this should be done with the two webs clamped together—the crank-shaft should prove quite satisfactory.

The guide-bars are of the four-bar type, and are easily made up out of strip and 1/4" tube for distance pieces. The crosshead is also a simple device, the projecting gudgeon-pin running between the guides. To secure the gudgeon-pin a small 1/32" pin should be drilled through and fitted to one of the forks of the crosshead, as illustrated in the detail drawing. The eccentric is arranged to work direct, and if the engine is required to reverse, the writer would recommend the well-known slip eccentric device. The eccentric may be bought with the cylinder, and can be modified to suit the above-mentioned reversing. This is done by filing off half the projecting boss and letting this engage with a small pin fixed in the axle. The diagram (Fig. 10) shows this in both forward and reverse positions, the reversing being effected by giving the flywheel half a turn in the direction the engine is required to go. If the eccentric is fixed then it must be placed with its centre of eccentricity 90° in advance of the crank. As the construction of the boiler is a task requiring careful description it is left to the next article. It will, however, be noticed that the steam is supplied through a screw-down stop-valve. This is, of course, optional, and in place of it the usual locomotive regulator may be employed.

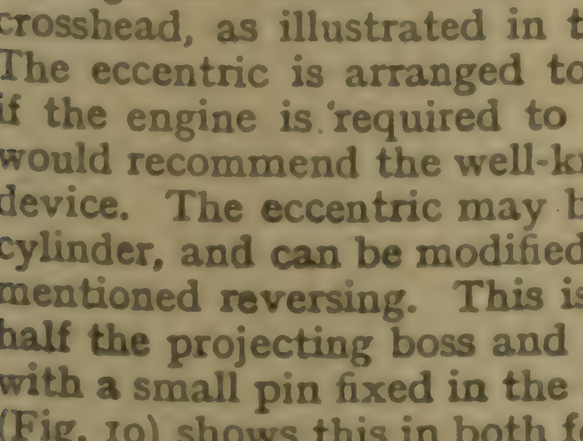


FIG. 11.—Fixed eccentrics.

The cylinder is encased in a saddle made up of plate with a hole in the front plate to allow the cylinder cover to project through. The front plate of the saddle is, therefore, made readily removable, for one thing to get at the union, and for another to enable it to be placed over the cylinder after the latter is fitted down to the bedplate. The smoke-box is of the circular type, so that a piece of 2¾" diameter light brass tube may be used for this. The exhaust-pipe should have a 1/16" nozzle.

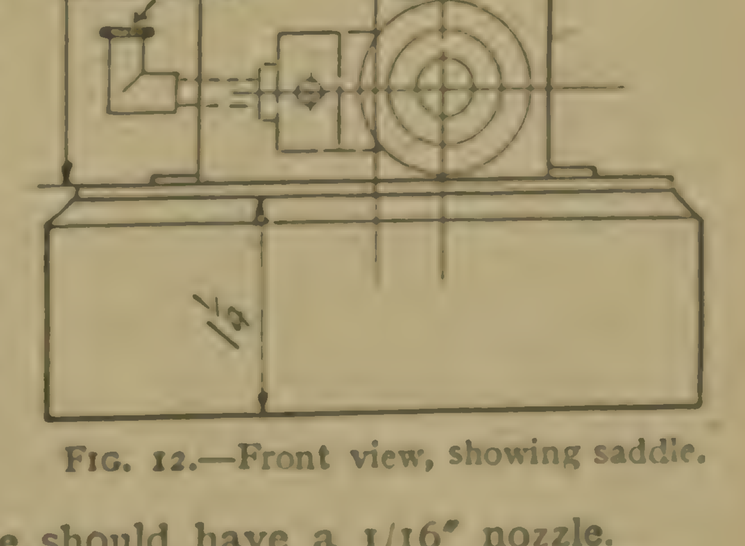


FIG. 12.—Front view, showing saddle.

The lamp reservoir may be made of sheet tin, and should have a vent-pipe coming out of the top. This pipe—which may be as small as 3/32" in diameter—must be soldered on, so that it does not project inside, but so that it properly relieves any gas pressure when the tank is full. If it projects inside the inside end may be below the level of the liquid, and any gas generated by the heat will eject the spirit. The filler is a piece of tube at the end, or if the wooden base is extended to the rear to carry a dynamo or other small model machine the filler cap may be placed in a piece of 1/4" or 5/16" tube fixed in the top of the tank and projecting through a hole in the metal bedplate. The vent may then be dispensed with, if the cap has a small hole in it.

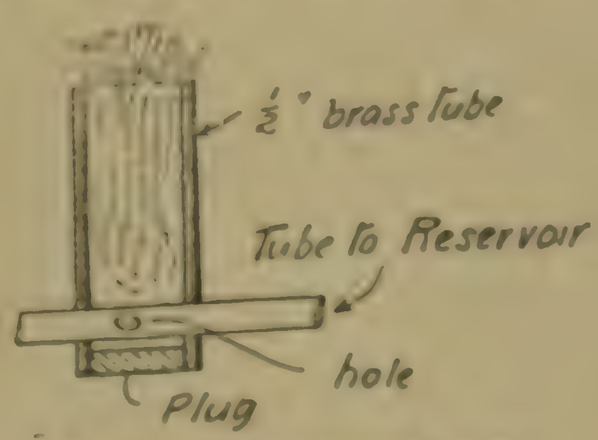


FIG. 13.—Lamp wick tube.

BLACK EVANS

By R. S. Warren Bell.

Author of "Tales of Greyhouse," "J. O. Jones," etc.

Synopsis

A NEW head master, the Rev. E. H. Talbot, is appointed to Christ's College, Abbotsleigh, and with him he brings forty scholars from the private school which he formerly governed at Pageways. Though there is no open warfare this intrusion is deeply resented by the boys of Christ's College, particularly by Fewlass Evans ("Black Evans"), a wild, lawless Fifth Former of seventeen years, renowned for his strength and his excellence at Rugby football. Evans has already come into verbal conflict with a senior from Pageways named Norman, and he has also drawn to himself the unfavourable notice of the new head master.

During a game of Rugby football Black Evans collars a "Pagan" forward so roughly that he breaks his collar-bone. The new head master then announces that the school in future will play Association instead of Rugby football. Evans is "gated," and he spends his leisure time in writing what he calls a novel, entitled "Talbot the Tyrant," in which occur many uncomplimentary references to the head master.

By accident he gives this up in place of an imposition which the head master had set him. Evans had just been elected captain of football, and the head master now annuls the election, and appoints Norman, a prefect from Pageways, in his stead.

Norman arranges a game between the First Eleven and "the Rest," and to his great annoyance the former are beaten. Evans is the only Christian selected to play for the Eleven in this match, and he does not turn out. The slight upon the Christians leads to riotous conduct on the part of the juniors of the two factions, but the head master contents himself with a week's gating for punishment. Meanwhile, Evans knows that his refusal to play in the match has been reported to Mr. Talbot, and he expects a summons to the head master's study. But no summons comes, and Evans feels uncomfortable.

CHAPTER XX

THE HEAD'S MEMORANDA

THE head master made his quiet speech after a good deal of unquiet deliberation. He had almost worn a path in his study carpet as he paced to and fro trying to decide what to do.

After breakfast on the day succeeding the outbreak in the dormitories he had sent King for Mr. Colles. The second master came in looking rather grim. He did not approve of the rapid changes that had been forced on the school, and in his heart of hearts he felt surprised that there had not been a serious rebellion.

"You want to see me, sir?" he said, stiffly, as he swung into the study.

"Yes, Colles. Sit down, will you?" replied Mr. Talbot, rather wearily. "I wanted to talk to you about this business of last night. Something will have to be done. More than twenty windows were broken, and there was other damage."

Mr. Colles did not feel inclined to help the head master out of his fix. People who made sudden, drastic changes, he thought, must be prepared to face the effect of those changes.

"Something must be done," continued the Head. "Have you anything to suggest?"

"I fear I have not," said Mr. Colles.

"There is one thing," said the Head. "I shall make them pay for those broken windows out of their pocket-money. Let me see, each boy receives threepence a week. One hundred and forty-four threepences—I leave the prefects out—make four hundred and thirty-two pence. Thirty-six shillings, I fear, will hardly pay for twenty windows. It must be stopped for two weeks."

"They'll break some more, then," put in Mr. Colles.

"Upon my word," cried the Head, irritably, "you seem to me to side with the boys—you sympathise with them, at any rate!"

Mr. Colles stirred in his chair. "I am afraid nothing profitable will result from this discussion, sir," he said. "I agree with you, however, that your best plan will be to pay your glazier's bill out of the pocket-money. It is such a small sum already," he added, with a flickering smile, "that they will hardly miss it."

And, indeed, the boys at Christ's were an impecunious lot. Each boy brought back only a few shillings at the beginning of the term, and half a crown of this was regularly impounded for the Games Fund. Even boys who brought back only five shillings (and many returned with less) had to hand over 50 per cent. of their modest capital for the purpose of providing footballs, goal-posts, corner flags, travelling expenses for the first and second teams, and so forth. These half-crowns did not, of course, constitute the entire Games Fund. Throughout the term each boy received threepence every Saturday, which sum was handed to him by his form-master at the end of morning school. The coppers so handed out never entirely left the school premises, for what part of them was not spent in the tuck-shop found its way into the collections in chapel, and came back from chapel to be handed out as pocket-money, and so the copper coinage at the school was in constant circulation. The tuck-shop was run on a co-operative system, for the profits all went to the Games Fund. If you were not a good footballer, therefore, you could support your school football by making large purchases of ginger-beer, cakes, and sweetmeats.

"Rather hard luck the boys from Pageways should be fined," murmured the fair-minded Colles. "The row was made by our fellows, I fancy."

"I am quite sure that not a single Pageways boy did any damage," replied the Head. "Still, I can't discriminate. All must suffer. And, by the way," he added, coldly, "they are all 'our fellows' now, don't you agree?"

Mr. Colles bowed his acquiescence to the mild rebuke. "Yes; pardon me."

"The head and fount of the whole business," continued the Head, striding furiously down the path he was making in the carpet, "is that boy Evans. I am sure of it. There will be no peace in this school as long as that boy remains here."

"While granting that Evans is a rather desperate character," said Mr. Colles, "I think he is innocent in this respect. He was with the prefects when the noise started, I am told, and on leaving them he went straight to bed."

"Ah, that reminds me!" ejaculated the Head, pausing in his promenade. For immediately after breakfast Norman had reported Evans for not turning out for football on the previous afternoon.

"He is a Welshman, Colles," he continued, resuming his walk, "and we must look for subtlety in his methods. It is characteristic of the master-mind not to appear prominently on the scene of the disturbance which he has fomented. I should have thought better of the boy if he had been mixed up in the trouble. There is something despicable about a boy who first eggs on other boys to mischief and then slips away so as not to be implicated with them."

"I don't think Evans is a boy of that type; however," said Mr. Colles. "But I will ask him about it. There's one thing—I have never known him to be untruthful."

"You surprise me," murmured the Head.

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Colles, rising. "The windows are to be paid for out of the pocket-money. And—er—anything else?"

"And I shall gate the whole school for a week," added Mr. Talbot, "with, of course, the exception of the prefects."

Mr. Colles looked thoughtful. "'Myes," he said. "Again rather hard on the Pageways contingent, though, isn't it?"

"I can't discriminate," said the Head, firmly. "We are all 'our fellows' now, let me remind you again."

"Ah, well, if it must be, it must be," rejoined the other. "It seems a pity, as they get little enough liberty as it is. I believe in plenty of liberty," he added, swinging down the track the Head had momentarily forsaken for

his chair. "I remember too well how I hated being hemmed in at school, running up against the same old corners and into the same old—and young—bullies at every turn. Plenty of air and liberty for everyone is what I believe in," he added, vehemently. "Let a boy live his life. Make school a happy place, a place a boy wants to come back to, not get away from."

"And yet the old, hard school life of Tom Brown's day produced a lot of fine men," urged the Head.

"And killed a lot," added Mr. Colles, dropping into his former seat.

"I believe," said the Head, slowly, "in strict discipline and closely defined boundaries of action. At school a boy is shaped for manhood. He must be drilled into what we want him to be."

"And I believe," retorted the second master, "in not interfering with the mould Nature has cast a man in. Find out a boy's gift and let him develop it. Give him liberty. Give him a chance. Let him go out and see the birds and the bees and the world of the hedges and ponds. Let him breathe the fresh air of the fields and woods, and not be faced at every turn by a wall or fence."

His colour had risen. It was evident that these two men, both absolutely sincere in their outlook, were destined to disagree on almost every point. And the Head saw it wouldn't do.

There are various ways of getting rid of a man you don't want. It is related of a famous millionaire newspaper proprietor that when he wanted to get rid of a high-salaried member of his staff he would do it in a very extravagant but, nevertheless, highly effectual manner. He would tell him that he was thirsting for a series of articles on parrot-shooting in Tasmania, and would this particular member of the staff go out there and write them? The member of his staff knew what it meant, and booked his passage like a condemned man sitting down to his last breakfast. For he knew that on his return he would be greeted affably by his proprietor, told how well and bronzed he looked, chaffed on the saucy fit of his ulster, assured that his articles on parrot-shooting had given the greatest possible pleasure to the public, and—then the axe would fall with a dull thud. During his absence, unfortunately, the post he had previously filled had been apportioned to another writer, and so, with great regrets, etc., etc., and best wishes for his future success, etc., etc.

Or a man will nag and make the place too hot to hold an unwelcome subordinate. Mr. Talbot's method was courteous, but to the point.

"My dear Colles," he said, "I feel sure you would make an ideal country parson."

"I don't know about making an ideal one," said Mr. Colles, "but as I have the chance of being one, I think I will take it. In short, Talbot, as I think it highly unlikely that we shall ever get on well together, I will ask you to accept my resignation."

"That can only be accepted by the Governors," replied the Head, "for so they have given me to understand. However, I will put it before them."

"If you will be so good," returned the second master, swinging out of the room.

The head master opened a drawer of his desk and took out some tablets on which he was accustomed to make important memoranda. On these he wrote in pencil:—

"Governors' Meeting. Oct. 9.
Colles resigns.
Evans Senior."

The weather, in its malign moods, exasperates and annoys most people, but even when most malicious it cannot help doing a few a good turn. Snow in London, becoming slush, is abominable, but in the country it warms the earth, thereby helping the crops-to-be, and is capital for making pancakes with. One thinks twice about making pancakes with London snow. Then rain. Who likes rain? Well, the macintosh-makers adore it, and boys who hate compulsory football greet it as a true friend. And on the present occasion it called a truce to the strife between Norman and Evans.

For it rained at Abbotleigh just about now in a way that would have made a modern Noah advertise for tenders from ark-builders. It did not rain just hard for a day or two, but it came down steadily day after day, in the slanting fashion that denotes the downpour to be a stayer. It gave the College a washing such as its oldest inhabitant — King, the butler—could not remember the like of. And it soaked the football ground to such an extent that, as Arrowsmith afterwards remarked in the *Collegian*, it did not appear safe to allow any junior to venture upon it unless he had made his will.

When the rain stopped it left, not a football field but a quagmire. After a couple of days' drying a mud-larking sort of game could have

been played, but in view of the Pulborough match, now close at hand, it was considered advisable to give the first pitch every chance to recover its wonted consistency. So there was no first game, though the other games waged miry combats on their own pitches.

Thus no further trial took place, and the school's side against Pulborough remained a matter of conjecture.

To be sure that his men were all fit and fresh, Norman waited until the eve of the match before he put the team on the board. Not until the fellows came out of prep. did they know who was going to play in Christ's first soccer match, and when the school—the Christian part of it, that is—saw the list, it was shaken by a gust of fury and surprise.

The side was the side which had played (and been beaten by) the Rest. It was a purely Pagan side, with Black Evans.

"There's only one thing left for them to do," said Arrowsmith, going into the Sixth room after surveying the list, "and that is to change the name of the school to Pageways. Have you fellows seen what that sidey bounder——"

But here Norman, who had been groping for a book in his desk, dropped the lid with a bang, and Arrowsmith's remark wilted down into an incoherent mutter.

The Sixth as a body were not in agreement with Arrowsmith. They saw that Norman was determined to take no risks. And, after all, the side he had drawn up, strengthened by Evans, was the best side. And it wasn't likely they would ease up in the second half *this* time!

"Going to play, Evans?" asked Carson of his dormitory chief, after 'Lights Out" in Twenty-four.

Evans grunted.

"What did he say?" Carson inquired of his familiar friend.

"Turning out, Fewlass?" demanded Dawson.

Evans repeated his grunt.

"Tell a chap," urged Carson.

"*Yes!*" bawled Evans, and settled himself for the night.

For the Welshman saw no reason why he should not have a last kick on the old mead. To him that evening King had quietly conveyed the intimation that the head master would require to see him after chapel on the following night. Lingering for a word with the popular footballer—Evans had no greater admirer than the butler—King mentioned casually that there was to be a Governors' meeting early in the afternoon.

Evans put two and two together. In the afternoon the Governors were to meet. After chapel he was to see the Man. Obviously, he was to be mentioned to the Governors. Obviously, also, he was not to be kept in suspense as to his fate.

So he would play against Pulborough. He would play. Then he would settle with Norman—and quit.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CASE OF EVANS

THE four grave and reverend seigneurs who attended the meeting of Governors consisted of a retired colonel, very bluff and important; a prebendary, round and sleek, who talked in rounded sentences, as if he were preaching; a member of Parliament who took a great interest in Church work—a serious gentleman, with lantern jaws, side-whiskers, and eyeglasses; and, lastly, a well-known family solicitor with a large and lucrative practice in the county, who acted as honorary legal adviser to Christ's College.

Of course, there were other Governors, but only these four had put in an appearance. First they lunched with the Head. As a rule the Governors' meetings were preceded by no meal, and were of a strictly formal kind, but the Head, being a business man, knew that it was a capital idea to give people a good lunch if one wished to get one's way in the negotiations to follow. And it *was* a good lunch, and the seigneurs did justice to it.

When cigars and coffee had been handed round, the colonel turned to the Head.

"Well, Talbot," he said in his bluff way, "and how are you settling down?"

"I fear I am settling down in a somewhat unsettling way," the Head replied. "Frankly, the boys do not like my innovations."

"They must get used to them," barked the colonel.

"No community is more conservative than a public school," ventured the solicitor.

"But times change, times change," put in the prebendary, who was leaning back in his chair in a state of great comfort, "and schools must move with them. Your predecessor, Mr. Talbot, was an excellent man, for whom I had the greatest respect, but he lived in the past."

At this rather unnecessary remark the

colonel frowned. He and the late Head had been staunch friends. The colonel did not like the prebendary, and the prebendary did not like the colonel. The colonel liked to handle men, the prebendary was infinitely more in his element when presiding over a party of ladies who had assembled to discuss the provision of tooth-brushes for the natives of Melanesia.

"Well," broke in the colonel, "we are all so comfortable that there doesn't seem to be any necessity to adjourn to another room. Just let us know how things are going."

"My innovations, as I have said," began the head master, "have caused a great deal of dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, I regard them as essential. The change in the code of football, for example. Most of the schools round here play Association football, and I think Christ's ought to come into line."

"Far too much time is devoted to games nowadays," murmured the prebendary.

"I'm sorry the old game's gone," snapped the colonel; "but then, I'm a Rugby boy."

"The parents," continued the Head, "do not like the new rule about age-limits."

"I have no doubt it presses hard on some of them," purred the family solicitor.

"But it is necessary," put in the M.P. "We cannot have a lot of boys loafing about here until they are eighteen unless they have arrived at a certain standard of knowledge. We are entirely with you. Some will suffer, no doubt, but it is for the good of the many."

"How about a fellow who wants to specialise?" asked the colonel.

"He can specialise after he has passed the Cambridge Senior," replied the Head. "I am happy to hear," he went on, "that you are in thorough agreement with me about these changes, for I cannot deny that they are most unpopular in the school. However, I shall live it down.

"Now, gentlemen, I want to ask you to allow me to spend a little money on lectures. I also propose to form a band of stringed instruments. Further, the laboratory is of a most primitive description—a few bottles and test tubes. If I have to make a change in the staff, I shall get a first-class science man."

After some talk it was agreed that the head master should have the money he required. The family solicitor was a little doubtful about the stringed instruments, but the prebendary assured him that music had an elevating and refining influence on a lad. The solicitor bowed and was silent.

"And now," said the head master, "there are two more matters. The first one will probably cause you some surprise. Mr. Colles desires me to put his resignation before you."

"Colles?" exclaimed the colonel. "Why, what can be the matter with the man?"

"We don't appear," said the Head, quite honestly, "to step together well. He represents Christ's College as it was."

"A most worthy man," murmured the prebendary, clasping his hands.

"He will be a great loss," said the colonel. "I think we ought to ask him to reconsider it."

"And yet," put in the family solicitor, "I can quite see the matter from Mr. Talbot's point of view. A man steeped in the old traditions of the college is bound to clash with what he considers a new head master's new-fangled ideas."

"There is something in that," agreed the colonel, "but it would be a thousand pities if we were to lose him. I know the man, too. He has stayed with me during several vacations, and a better fellow doesn't breathe. He ought to have been in the army. The men would have followed him to the gates of—er——"

The prebendary raised his eyebrows. "Yes, of course," he said, in his bland voice, "I am willing to grant that Mr. Colles possesses many excellent qualities, but it will hardly be necessary for the boys of Christ's College to follow him to the—er—destination I fancy you had in your mind."

"Well, what shall we say?" said the colonel, looking at his watch. "Football match on to-day, isn't there, sir?" he added, addressing the Head. "I should like to see a bit of it. Interesting to see how they shape in this new Soccer, or whatever you call it."

"If Mr. Colles is not likely to work harmoniously with Mr. Talbot," observed the family solicitor, "there is no course open to us but to accept his resignation. We are not here to discuss the interests of the individual so much as of the mass."

"Very well, then," said the colonel, throwing the stump of his cigar into the fireplace. "You had better tell him, Talbot, that we have received his resignation with the very greatest regret, but under the circumstances are unable to do anything but accept it."

"And we must see about a living for him," murmured the prebendary.

"And now, finally," said the Head, "we come to another question which concerns the mass rather than the individual. There is a boy here called Evans—Evans Senior. From the very commencement of the term I have had trouble with him. On the first day of the term, indeed, I found him in a tobacconist's shop in the town. He said he was getting a razor—the tobacconist is also a barber—and, of course, his ready explanation, coupled with the fact that it was the opening day of the term, led me to take no further notice of the matter. At the only game of Rugby football which has been played he behaved with unnecessary violence to some of the boys who came with me from Pageways—at least, I fancy he did." The colonel's moustache hid a smile. "There have been several disturbances owing to this change of football, and I suspect him of being the ringleader. A number of windows were smashed, for instance, the other day. The school is now paying for them out of its pocket-money."

"One cannot very well condemn a boy on suspicion," said the family solicitor. "Have you any concrete facts to go on? Has he deliberately broken any rules or committed any glaring misdemeanours?"

"Several," said the Head, sharply. "One day he mounted the horse which pulls the large roller, and galloped it into the upper field, riding in front of the windows here with the greatest effrontery. I punished him severely for this act."

"Most reprehensible," the prebendary declared.

"I set him an imposition of Greek lines," went on the Head," and when I asked him for them he handed me up an exercise-book containing not Greek lines but a scurrilous story of which I appeared to be the leading character."

"He doubtless didn't mean you to see it," said the solicitor. "Probably he had the lines done and got the books mixed up."

"You do not know the boy, sir," said the Head. "I take him to be capable of any act of insubordination or insolence. He flouts the authority of the football captain. In short, I consider him to be a power for evil, and I

Myers was hugely enjoying his victim's struggles when the prebendary arrived on the scene.

anticipate constant trouble with him. I desire that his parents be requested to remove him at the end of the present term."

The Governors looked grave. They did not like to cut short a boy's career in this way, and they took into consideration the fact that there had been a considerable amount of agitation in the air since the arrival of Mr. Talbot. The boy had not started well, and the head master had evidently been on the look-out for misdeeds from him. Being found at the tobacconist's on the first day of term was not a very grave offence, although it did not look well. Riding the horse was just the foolhardy escapade of a high-spirited boy.

"I hardly think," said the colonel, at length, glancing to right and left at his colleagues, "that you have sufficient grounds upon which to base this request to his parents. I should give him a good thrashing, if I were you, Talbot, and warn him that if he causes any further trouble the consequences will be fatal."

The Head looked disappointed. "May I ask," he said, "if that is your general opinion, gentlemen?"

"I think it would be the best thing to do," said the M.P. "It is rather early in the term to give a young dog like this a bad name and hang him forthwith. His name has never been before us previously," and as the prebendary seemed to agree with this opinion, Mr. Talbot had nothing more to say.

"Well," he said, "I think that's all."

The colonel rose briskly. "Then let's go and have a look at their game of football. Heavens! I haven't seen a game of football for years. Makes one feel young again, eh, prebendary?"

They went out in a body, these grave and reverend seigneurs, and walked across the upper field in a solid, dignified group. No doubt the few juniors who saw them looked upon them as rather terrible persons, but there was really nothing about them to afford anybody cause for alarm. These elderly gentlemen, each with his own cares and responsibilities, gave a considerable amount of time to other people's concerns. They attended workhouses and gaols, and sat on all sorts of committees. The people who spend their leisure entirely in pursuits that entertain them, the man with whom stamps are a passion, the golf maniac, the camera fiend, the "hockey girl," the playgoer, know nothing of these excellent seigneurs. Yet the fruits of their labours are everywhere evident. They are for ever planning and labouring for others. They have their weaknesses and their foibles, and the comic artist makes great play with them, but how could the world go on without them?

Grave and reverend seigneurs, kindly guardians of our youth, applying your grey wisdom and your time to our better upbringing, unknown to us and ever destined to be, most of you of our time now asleep, we salute you!

CHAPTER XXII

THE PULBOROUGH MATCH

PULBOROUGH came out of their dressing-room in all the glory of their orange and black colours. They were big fellows, for Pulborough was a public school with five hundred and seventeen boys in it. It was the first time the Pulborough men had set foot on Christian ground. The juniors looked upon them with awe, the seniors with curiosity. Up to this time the college had absolutely ignored any school which had not played Rugby. In the narrowness and bigotry of youth they had thought there was no other game worth attention.

As for Pulborough, they gazed at the buildings and round the grounds with considerable interest. Christ's was a school that did not rank with theirs, but it was a school which had turned out good men, and it is the scholars that make a school, not the school its scholars. An old Christian, they knew, was now playing three-quarter-back for Wales, and there was a fellow still at the school, they also knew, who had got his trial cap for the county as a full-back, a man called Evans. They had heard with no little amusement that Christ's were going to play Soccer in future; but Christ's having been quite good at Rugger, it seemed to their majesties of Pulborough that they would not be lowering themselves very much by giving the school the date on their card that had unexpectedly fallen vacant.

Hailing from a great school, boys do not readily let the world forget the fact. In some cases, hardly a day passes but the fact is mentioned. Pulborough, with its history reaching back into the dim Middle Ages, was a name known the wide world over. Pulborough men had every reason to regard themselves as superior beings to members of the other schools in the county, and quite apart from their ancient foundation and its glorious traditions, they were one of the best Soccer schools in England. They could wipe

the ground with almost any Oxford or Cambridge college, while the Casuals and Old Westminsters and other great Soccer clubs took care to send down their strongest team against them.

Consequently it was no little condescension on their part—but at the same time the typical Pulborough sort of thing to do, indeed—to have consented to play a game with a neighbour that was only just taking to their code.

They had not sent their strongest side against Christ's, but they had sent quite a good one. It was their second team, with a sprinkling of the first, including the captain of football. An old ball was requisitioned for them, and they were soon having pots at goal.

The Pulborough goal-keeper was a man of great height, being a full two inches over six feet. Though gawky, he was wiry and very quick. Thanks to his inches, shots that would have scored he was able to pull down with the tips of his fingers or tilt over the bar. He was a better man than the Pagan goal-keeper, and Norman, who was looking on, readily acknowledged it.

"Wish we had a fellow like that," he said to Colebrooke. "Look how he gets down to them, too!"

All the Christians were taking a great interest in the Pulborough practice. These fellows represented the best class of Soccer played by any school. The Pagan goal-keeper watched his rival with some envy. He himself was quite a sound goalie, but he couldn't throw the ball almost down to the touchline as this fellow did, and the long man's punches were terrific to see.

Mr. Talbot, coming on to the field with the Governors, felt extremely pleased with himself when he caught sight of the orange and black shirts.

"It is a most fortunate thing," he observed to the prebendary, "that we have been able to secure a match with Pulborough, as they are the best school in the county."

"Most fortunate," murmured the prebendary; "but surely, it is hardly likely to be an equal contest?"

"No," said the head master, "I fear that we shall be rather overmatched, but that doesn't really matter at all."

"I think we have to thank our good showing at Rugby for this match," said the colonel.

"Possibly," said the head master, stiffly. "The head master of Pulborough and I were in the Worcester boat at the same time," he added, and the colonel, seeing the inference, nodded.

Mr. Carter, who was to hold the whistle, now bustled on to the field. Norman and the captain of Pulborough tossed up, and Norman, winning, elected to play with the wind, which was blowing a little briskly.

The Pulborough captain didn't mind. He would be able to hold his own, he felt sure, against the wind, and a good deal more than his own after half-time.

The teams lined up, and the whistle shrilled out.

Off! Christ's College was playing its first Soccer match, and, as fortune had it, against the stiffest opponents it could have picked.

The ground was dry and the ball light. For five minutes there was a certain amount of indiscriminate kicking while the players got the feel of it, and then Pulborough began to show a touch of their form. The front line swept up the field with the ball going from man to man.

"This looks dangerous," muttered the Head, and even the prebendary's grasp of his umbrella handle tightened. It certainly looked dangerous.

Pulborough flashed through Christ's half-back line. The ball was with the Pulborough right, and Christ's left back was advancing, with Evans lying back. The Pulborough outside right had a short tussle with the college back, and, beating him, passed to his inside man, who centred. The tall Pulborough captain trapped the ball neatly, and was in the very act of shooting, his right foot being already in the air, when a large portion of the ground seemed to get up and hit him. Anyhow, he was floored uncompromisingly, and Evans, shouldering off the Pulborough inside left, dribbled the ball down the field at his leisure and sent it out to his right wing.

The Pulborough captain, somewhat shaken, got up slowly.

Christ's right was soon dispossessed, and again Pulborough came along in their pretty fashion, Norman and his halves working hard to keep them back. The ball was centred again, and this time nearer to the goal. It was dropping, and the tall Pulborough centre shaping to head it into goal, when, as the ball touched his head, a shoulder was pushed into his ribs with a force that made him gasp. Again the citadel was saved, but the Pulborough captain was looking at Evans.

"A useful man, that," growled the colonel to the Head. "Who is he?"

"It is the boy I spoke to you about," said the Head. "Evans."

"Oh, *that's* Evans?" said the colonel, with a new interest. "I fancy these Pulborough fellows will remember him!"

There was no doubt that, seeing the odds were against his side, Black Evans was using his weight and strength with hearty vigour. Time after time, with the left back beaten, he dashed in and stopped the rushes of the Pulborough right wing. And his success gave confidence to the Christ's team, who saw that there was a lot to be done against superior science by bold tackling. Anyhow, at half-time nothing had been done in the way of scoring.

But wait, said Pulborough—we have got the wind with us now.

"Well," said the prebendary, as he extended a gloved hand to the head master, "I must say that the school has made a very good start, seeing that this is their first Association match. I wish them success," and, nodding farewell to his brother governors, he ambled gently out of the ground and across the lane into the upper field.

He was walking up the field when a shrill cry from the direction of the fives courts attracted his attention. It was not a pleasant cry. It was a cry of pain and fear intermingled.

The prebendary stopped and turned. Near the edge of the right court lay a little boy. Another boy was sitting on his chest, and another was holding his feet.

"Most reprehensible," muttered the prebendary. "Still, boys will be boys."

He was ambling on when another cry fell upon his ears; it was a shriek rather than a cry. He paused, hesitated, then turned and walked slowly towards the fives courts. At the precise moment that he arrived at the fives courts a red-haired junior called Myers had succeeded in thrusting a piece of turf into Pilcher's mouth, rendering Pilcher incapable of further expostulation. Having done this, Myers seized Pilcher's nose, thereby rendering respiration a matter of difficulty.

The slender little child—Pilcher was no more—had been tormented by these two all the afternoon. No matter how he tried to elude them, they always seemed to be on his track, for bullies are not necessarily big boys; indeed, bullies are just as often small ones, and Myers was a malignant instance of his class. He had never given two thoughts to Pilcher's lameness, but looked upon the new boy as a whimpering little baby, and suspected him of sneaking propensities. Above and beyond this, Myers was of the type of boy that loves to hurt others.

So at last he had succeeded in driving the child out of the football field, where Pilcher had been furtively watching his hero, Evans, playing his desperate game at full-back; had succeeded in driving him into the upper field, where it was quiet and there was no danger of interruption, and, aided by one Chapman, a fellow spirit, he had thrown down Pilcher on the fives courts, and at last had achieved his object, namely, to fill Pilcher's mouth with dirt.

The new boy's face was darkening in colour when the prebendary arrived on the scene. Myers was hugely enjoying his victim's wriggles when the ferrule of an umbrella was placed in his ribs, and a mild voice fell on the air.

"Get up, boy. It is not fair to tease one smaller and younger than yourself."

Myers and Chapman got up on the instant, and gazed with apprehension at the gaitered figure standing over them.

"What is the matter, my boy?" the prebendary inquired of Pilcher. "Dear me, you have been putting dirt in his mouth! I am ashamed of you! Go away, little boys, go away! I have a good mind to report you to the head master. I'm shocked," and with a soft, gloved hand the prebendary helped Pilcher to his feet.

"Poor little boy," he said, "don't cry. They have gone. You must try and look after yourself better, my lad. What is your name?"

But Pilcher couldn't reply. His soul was filled with misery, for Myers and Chapman had rendered his life well-nigh intolerable. He just stood there breathing in gasps and with his lips quivering. With that boy astride his chest, and his mouth chockful of turf, powerless to help himself, he had experienced the actual agony of death. And less than a month before he had been living a happy, sheltered life, playing in a large garden with his little brothers and sisters, with no knowledge at all of the rough world outside. From there he had been taken up and hurled into this great school, which seemed a very cruel and ugly place to him. He knew that he must not sneak—that had been impressed upon him by the very first boy who had put a pin

in his leg—and although he felt inclined to write home and tell them how miserable he was, he refrained, for just now he knew his mother was ill. He couldn't very well tell anybody that his life was a life of torture, that his sleep was disturbed, that he never knew when one of his enemies might not dart out upon him. He went in fear and trembling all the time. But never had he been tortured as upon this afternoon.

"There, there, my boy," said the prebendary. "You must try and stick up for yourself. If these boys annoy you again, you must report them to one of the prefects, or to your form master. We want all the boys here to be happy," added the prebendary, placing his plump hand on Pilcher's frail shoulder. "There, little man, cheer up, cheer up! And I dare say," he concluded, facetiously, "that some bull's-eyes would help in the process."

Taking sixpence from his pocket, he pressed it into Pilcher's grimy little hand, and ambled away.

Black Evans strode silently through the crowd of boys that acclaimed his prowess: "Well played, Evans!" "Good man, Evans!" they cried.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE END OF THE MATCH

IT would be difficult to describe exactly what was going on in Pilcher's mind. He was reduced to a state of numbed despair. If anybody had kicked or hit him then he would hardly have felt it. The coin slipped from his nerveless fingers and fell on

the cement floor of the fives court. The sound of it roused him, and mechanically he bent down and picked the sixpence up. He was in the position of one whose outlook is hopeless. He looked round in a dazed sort of way for his tormentors, but they had put a considerable distance between themselves and the fives courts. Dashing his hands across his eyes, he wandered to the gate of the upper field, across the lane, and on to the football ground, walking as it were into a sea of roaring voices.

The sides had changed over, and now, helped by the wind, the Pulborough attack was more threatening than ever, but still Christ's College was beating them off. It was obvious to anybody that Pulborough were the better team; they were bigger, they were more scientific, they were quicker, and, above everything, they possessed any amount of confidence. Often before they had played in matches where they had been obviously the better team, and had nevertheless found it difficult to notch a point.

It is often thus in football; wherefore one can only judge a team's capabilities by its season's play, never on one afternoon's performance.

Christ's College, rushing to hasty conclusions, told one another that Pulborough were an overrated lot. If this was the star team of the county, what must the other schools be like? But the masters, who knew something about the game, saw that Pulborough must prevail in time. They did not allow themselves to get flurried, for they had been excellently trained. They did not go in for desperate *mêlées* in front of goal. Unconsciously they played on the pattern of a First League professional team, their play consisting of a series of movements up the field. Driven back, they bided their time, and then again advanced. One of these movements was bound to succeed; from one of these pretty bits of combination a goal was certain to accrue.

It was soon after Pilcher arrived in the field and sauntered desolately along by the high wooden palings that bordered the enclosure, that a tremendous roar from the College onlookers fairly cleft the sky. The College had scored; more by accident than design, it is true, but they had scored.

The ball had come to Greatheart, who was in the half-back line, and with his back to the enemy's goal he had kicked the ball over his head in the direction of that citadel. It was a high, long kick. It has been said that the ground was hard and the ball light. The ball dropped down some yards in front of the Anak in goal, and bounced high. He jumped for it, but a second too soon, and could not reach it, and as he turned round on the instant to retrieve it he had the mortification of seeing it trickle slowly over the goal-line.

It was one of those fluke goals that create as much mirth as applause. The Christians not only cheered, but roared with delight. The College was leading!

The tall Pulborough skipper looked a little grim as he kicked off. Pulborough must not lose this match. It would be the talk of all the schools in the county if a school that had only just taken up Soccer were to beat them. So now the Pulborough forwards began to shoot from almost any distance and at any angle, the half-backs sturdily aiding and abetting them.

This sort of game placed Evans at a disadvantage. At close quarters he was redoubtable, his strength and weight enabling him to tackle successfully. These long shots had to be negotiated with the head if one could get near enough to them to do it. He experienced many strenuous and anxious moments.

And so the game went on, with the College forwards vainly endeavouring to get off in a combined run, invariably being dispossessed of the ball by the Pulborough half-backs, and then a rain of shots from Pulborough. As each shot was cleared there arose a fresh yell from the onlookers. The attention of every man and boy on the field was riveted not so much on the field of play as on the Christ's College goal.

Only one small inhabitant of this big world-in-little was utterly indifferent to the exciting scene being enacted on the mead, as he crept along by the palings, his face wet with tears that he could not keep back. But even he stopped for a moment at a sudden alteration in the applause.

Instead of a cheer, a cry of dismay broke out, and then a patter of clapping that had no enthusiasm in it.

One of the Pulborough long shots had taken effect, and the scores were level. The better science had at last prevailed.

Very much depends on the *morale* of a team. The most human of us are the most affected by reverses and the most set up by victories. The man of iron who is never greatly elated and never greatly disappointed—is he entitled to the awe he inspires?

The Collegians were not of an iron type, anyhow. That ball, dropping down into the goal-mouth and eluding the two backs and the goal-keeper in its erratic flight, showed them how easy it was after all for a goal to be scored. If they had been elated before, now they felt apprehensive. Pulborough instinctively diagnosed their mood. Long shot tactics were taboo, and the line again swept up. There were furious encounters in front of goal, hard knocks were given and taken. Wherever anything like an opening appeared a Pulborough foot was there to kick the ball. Quickly another goal was registered.

The five Pulborough scientists were playing like a machine now. Three minutes later, after a short, fierce conflict with Evans, they again had the ball in the net.

So Pulborough had found their form at last, said some. Nay, they had never lost it. It had always been with them. More truly, the fire had departed from the College defence. Christ's was disorganised.

When the last whistle sounded, Pulborough had a lead of three goals, for they scored a fourth just on time.

"To be frank with you," said the Pulborough skipper to Norman, "we never thought you would put up such a game as this. We will try and squeeze a fixture with you for next term, and will certainly give you a couple of dates next season."

"Awfully good of you," said Norman.

"And you ought to make quite a good show against other Soccer schools," said the Pulborough captain. "But there's one thing," he added, as he pulled his sweater over his head. "You ought to say a wee word to that right back of yours. His methods like me not."

"Nor me," said Norman.

"Oh, you noticed them? Well, you won't make friends with other Soccer schools if he introduces those pro. tricks of his every time he plays."

"You can rely on me to see that he doesn't," Norman assured him.

And meanwhile Evans, his old and rather grimy sweater tied by the arms round his neck, was striding silently through a crowd of Christians that were acclaiming his prowess.

"Well played, Evans!" "Good man, Evans!" "Hard luck, Evans!"

He was deaf to all such cries, for he was just then possessed with a feeling of envy and hatred of these well-turned-out Pulborough men. He was no stickler for appearances, but he felt what a shabby figure he cut by their side. He was even wearing a pair of boots he had borrowed.

Chapel was over, and the school was clattering up the great staircase to bed. The main subject of conversation was the match. A little more luck, Christ's College agreed, and they might have at least drawn it.

The main feeling was one of satisfaction. The school had shown up much better than anyone had expected.

The hero of the afternoon had undoubtedly been Evans, and his name was in every mouth. He had played a rough game, but he had done nothing unfair. His dash, his quickness, and his daring, all made subjects of enthusiastic comment.

And while this talk was going on, Evans, who, pro. tricks or no pro. tricks, had won the school two fixtures with Pulborough next season, which meant a great deal more than it sounded, was making his way to the head master's study to hear his sentence. He guessed that a crisis in his life had arrived. The visit originally fixed had been postponed from a good while back until to-night, and in the meantime, he had no doubt whatever, his case had been placed before the Governors. This could be the only interpretation of the postponement.

Some instinct told him that the masters knew he was visiting the Head that night; he had seen one or two of them looking at him curiously in chapel. And in chapel the Head had looked very stern.

At the door of the Head's study he was intercepted by King.

"Wait a minute, will you, Mr. Evans?" said the butler. "Miss Fairbrother is with the head master."

So Evans waited outside.

"Good match to-day, sir," said King.

Evans grunted.

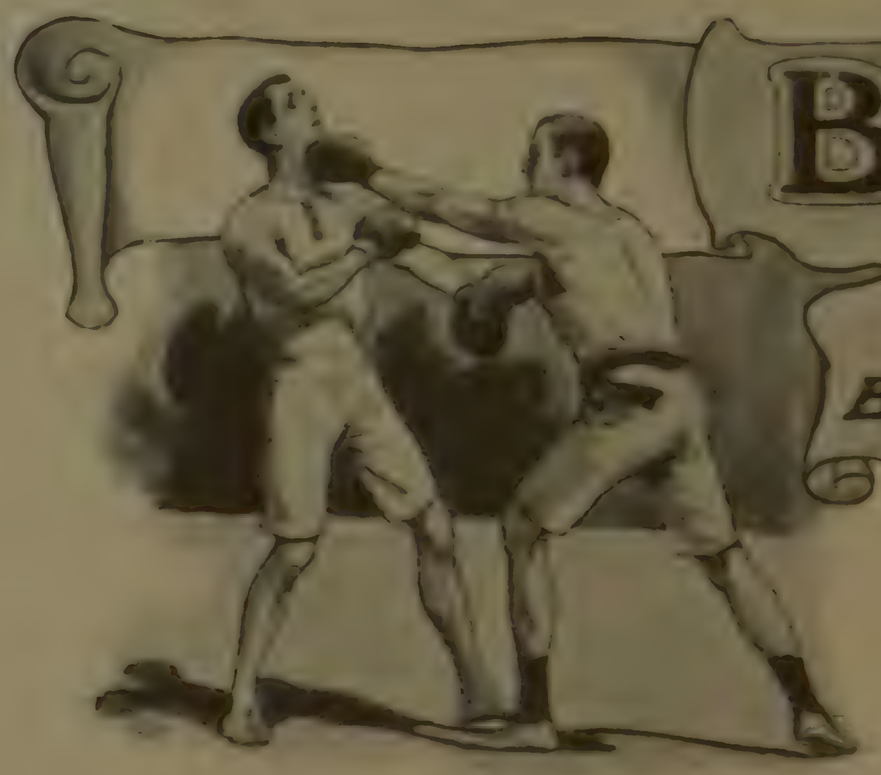
"You did wonders, sir," added King.

"Oh, shut up!" growled Evans, and at that moment Miss Fairbrother, the matron, came out of the study with a look of peculiar anxiety on her face.

"King, Mr. Talbot wishes to see you," she said, as she rustled down the passage. Of Evans she took no notice at all.

Evans waited until she had gone, and then put a knuckle to the door.

(To be concluded.)



BOXING FOR BOYS

By A·L·CHAMPNEYS

(Fourth Article)

A Splendid New Series of Practical and Instructive Articles by the Famous Heavyweight Champion of Oxford University in 1899, 1900, and 1901

Left-handed Cross-Counters

A LEFT lead either at head or body may also be countered with a left at the head, if you can hit quicker than your opponent or have the gift of anticipating a hit before it is actually on its way. Otherwise your left counter must be accompanied by a duck to the right so as to let the lead pass over your left shoulder in case your counter is not quick enough. In this case it will be necessary to step forward with your left as you counter, and the counter may be delivered either on the head or body. In the same way, if you counter a right-hander with your right, you must depend on extra speed; but this counter is not very often useful, the cross-counter with the left being, in most circumstances, the proper answer to a right-handed blow.

In order to cross-counter your opponent's left with your right without ducking, the gift of anticipation referred to above is more than ever essential; but when you have attained it there is no more effective blow than the right cross-counter to the jaw, since your adversary himself contributes largely to its force.

Your right arm should be inside your opponent's left when the blow lands, and the fist should have a slight upward tendency.

If you are not quick enough to cross-counter his left in this manner, you can avoid his blow by ducking to the left and crossing your right either to body or head. This cross-counter at the head is not so effective as that without a duck, because your arm must go outside your opponent's, and your blow is apt to land too high up on the side of his head, the chin being protected by his shoulder. The cross-counter at the body, however, is very effective with the duck, and should be landed on the lower ribs of your opponent's left side, the direction not being very favourable for reaching the mark effectively.

Often these counters are accompanied by guarding instead of ducking. The methods described are, however, preferable, as guarding not only wastes more energy, but detracts to some extent from the force of the counter.

All the above counters and cross-counters have been described as for "out-fighting." At close quarters all countering and cross-countering is, of course, done with a bent arm used in the manner described under "in-fighting." These "bent-arm" counters and cross-counters are, however, as the upper-cut, generally used either as the men get close together or as they separate again, since, as has been pointed out, at really close quarters you must depend on rapidity of hitting with either hand and on getting "inside" your opponent's guard rather than on any strategy of move and counter-move as in "out-fighting." When, however, you are getting close to your adversary your counters should always be "inside" rather than "outside" his arm, so that you will have the advantage in the rally which follows.

Guarding

As soon as the beginner first puts on the gloves with an opponent he will find that it is most important to learn to protect himself from attack. Though in many ways inferior to countering, the most elementary, and therefore the first, method to be learnt is that known as guarding. Guarding means warding off your opponent's blow by interposing your hand or arm before it lands.

Just as there is an infinite number of variations of different blows, so must the different guards be varied to meet them; but for present purposes it will be sufficient to describe a few of the main guarding movements most generally employed, and of which the others are mostly modifications.

A left lead at the head is usually guarded with the right arm, the blow being received on the forearm. For this guard the right arm should be raised as your opponent hits, the palm of your hand being turned towards him, and your arm forcing his upwards and slightly to your right, so that it will not reach your head. The earlier in its progress that the blow is stopped the better, and your right should go forward as it is raised in order to meet his left. If when leading with the left at the head yourself, you think that your opponent will counter with his left, you may use this guard as you lead; though you may be sorry for it if you have anticipated wrongly.

Some boxers make a very effective use of this guard by bringing their right hand down to their opponent's jaw immediately after, and this movement is well worth practising, though it needs great accuracy and quickness.

If you are not in a good position for this guard a left lead may be warded off with your left glove. For this guard the inside of your opponent's arm

at the wrist or elbow should be struck as it comes towards you with the palm of your left hand. You should, however, follow this with a left at the head without waste of time, as it otherwise lays you open to your opponent's right. If, however, you strike your opponent's arm with sufficient force you may swing him round and be able to take advantage of his awkward position before he can recover himself.

To guard a right-handed hit at the head your left arm should be used much as the right in the guard just described, your left arm sending your opponent's right upwards and outwards, and your palm being again turned forward. This guard, similarly, may be followed by a left hook at the head.

To guard with your right when your opponent hits at your head with his right, the back of the right hand should be placed against the part to be protected, generally the left cheek, and the blow taken on the palm of the hand, the muscles of hand and arm being stiffened to receive the force of the blow as it lands. A left at the body, if your right arm is in the ordinary position, requires no guard beyond a stiffening of the muscles of your right arm as the blow comes in.

A right at the body may be guarded by bringing the left elbow against the ribs and the left forearm and fist in front of the mark, or the left ribs may be protected by placing the palm of the right hand against them and receiving the blow on the back of the hand.

When boxing at really close quarters, guarding in the ordinary way is of no use, and, as has been explained in a former article, you must rely for defence mainly upon quickness in hitting. Sometimes, however, you may find yourself at a disadvantage when at close quarters, especially if you are against the ropes; and in such a case it is necessary to "cover up" in order to avoid punishment.

If it is only your head that needs protection, both hands should be placed before your face, the back of the right hand against the left cheek, and the back of the left hand against the right cheek, with the wrists crossed, the right wrist being inside and the left outside.

If you are likely to receive body blows as well, you should keep your left side towards your opponent, guarding your left ribs with your left upper-arm and the mark with the left forearm and fist, and the left cheek with your left shoulder and right hand, the shoulder being raised to protect the chin and the back of the right hand being placed against the left cheek. Your left arm and hand should, of course, be held close against the body. This use of the left shoulder as a protection to the chin is a method of defence which may be remembered with advantage in many occasions besides that considered here.

Ducking

Short of being hit, nothing "takes it out of" a boxer more, morally as well as physically, than hitting the air. If you can duck your opponent's blows successfully, that is exactly what he will do. Also, this method of defence gives good opportunities of getting in a hit yourself, because it leaves you where your opponent was not expecting you to be.

Ducking should, of course, only be used as a means of avoiding blows at the head, since getting under a body blow would be altogether too acrobatic a feat for safety.

As with hitting and guarding, there is almost an infinity of variations in the way this move may be executed, so that only the more usual methods will be described here.

In order to avoid a left at the head you should step forward with your left foot as your opponent leads, at the same moment bringing your head forward and down so that the blow passes over it, and as soon as it is past, your head should be raised outside your opponent's left arm. The simultaneous forward movements of each will bring your bodies close together.

This movement may, of course, be accompanied by a left half-arm hit either at body or head. The forward and downward movement of the head may be either straight towards your opponent's left fist or it may be inclined to either left or right; but in any case the head should be lifted afterwards outside your opponent's left arm. Your left foot should, however, be inside his left foot.

It must also be remembered that the safety of this move largely depends on your ducking towards your opponent, even when you do not step forward, so that after it you are too close to him for him to hit you.

In ducking a right-hander your head should be moved in the same way, but slightly to the right, so that the blow travels outside and over it, and it should, of course, be raised outside your opponent's right arm. This duck, too, may be accompanied by a right half-arm hit at either head or body.

When boxing at close quarters a man who is good at head-work may play a most bewildering game of hide-and-seek with his opponent's hooks and upper-cuts; and this sort of work is always amusing to watch in exhibition boxing, and sometimes very useful in the real thing.

Though ducking is less simple a means of avoiding a blow than simply getting out of distance by retreating, it has, as I have said, the advantage of giving you an opportunity of countering; and in addition to this you can duck when you have your back against the ropes and could not retreat if you wished to. In these circumstances ducking combined with slipping may often get you out of a very awkward situation.

Slipping

In such cases, where the need for getting back into the open is paramount, your duck will not be accompanied by a counter, and instead of advancing your left foot inside your opponent's left foot you must let it pass outside it and step quickly past him with your left shoulder well forward. Once free you may bring up your right foot and with a sharp turn to the left bring your right fist on to his left ear.

Similarly you may duck and slip past a right-hander, but in this case, after ducking, you must bring your right foot and shoulder forward and step past him right foot first. This movement, similarly, may be followed by a left half-arm hit at the head.

(Another Article next month.)

SOUTHAMPTON STREET,
STRAND, LONDON.

It is not exactly an unknown occurrence for me to receive from a reader a letter saying that such-and-such a story was very clever, very entertaining, and enjoyable, and all that; but, of course, "quite impossible." Now some little while ago we had a story of some train robbers who held up an American express under especially exciting circumstances. The publication of that yarn brought me quite a crop of letters informing me of the fact that railway brigands had long ago joined the ranks of the celebrities of the past presided over by the dodo and the ichthyosaurus. They would be glad, said these valued and well-meaning critics, if I saw to it that CAPTAIN stories only portrayed life as it really was, and not to allow anything to go through that was remote from the truth—and so on to the last bitter drop. Now that is the sort of letter which, figuratively, ought to send me into sackcloth and ashes, but it so happened that it did nothing of the kind. For on my desk that morning was an American newspaper which told of a "hold-up" of a far more sensational nature than the one our author had chronicled, and which that very week had *actually* occurred. In the same way our school heroes are occasionally abused as being impossibly clever, or adventurous, or careless, or disdainful of the punishment which is sure to follow, and, like "Stalky & Co.," are placed in the category of "never-could-bes." The fact of the matter is, of course, that the boy whose exploits are recorded in a story is, and must be, a boy of exceptional nature, else he would not do those very things which lead the observant author to make a "character" of him. He needs must be an extraordinary fellow, and the boy whose habits are not very far removed from the usual is apt to believe that he cannot even exist, and therein he makes a very great mistake.

I know personally of a boy at school who week after week performed some feat which, in the telling, seems almost incredible. One exploit of his I remember particularly, for it has always stood in my mind as a most perfect example of sustained nerve and cool impertinence. He belonged to one of our greatest public schools, and had an absolute genius for "making-up." One morning he carefully prepared his hair, put on a pair of spectacles, took great pains in affixing a certain false moustache which he had chosen with a true artist's eye for effect, and made his way to the station. Thence he drove back to the school, and informed the butler that he was an old boy, Hardy by name. "Ah, to be sure, Mr. Hardy," said the old fellow; "of course, you were here in—in—er—in——" My friend supplied the date, and the butler immediately, strange to say, remembered him very well! Thence he visited the matron, who, good soul, hoped "that his health was better than it used to be," and after that he sat down to dinner with sixty of his fellow schoolboys, not one of whom (excepting three who were in the secret from the first) had the least suspicion of his real identity. He carried the whole escapade off so faultlessly well in every little detail that it was never even suspected, and yet, seen in cold type, it does seem an impossible thing for him to have accomplished. There was

nothing commendable in the whole performance, of course, and I certainly do not advise Captainites to endeavour to emulate it, for the sweets of success are not to be measured against the pains of failure; I mention the matter simply as an illustration of the old adage that truth is stranger than fiction. Half a dozen irrefutable reasons could be put forth at once showing that he *must* have been instantly exposed; but in spite of all logic and the crying demands of common sense, the hard fact remains that he went through with his little joke to its superb end (which, lest it should be recognised, I have not mentioned), and won hands down. Some of the finest and truest tales that have ever been written (and the true ones are always the finest) are among those which have been condemned by the ignorant as "far-fetched." It is a great mistake to describe a thing as impossible merely because you cannot conceive it happening. There are very few stories written to-day which are not based on solid fact.

Rugby or Soccer?—Captainites who are following Mr. Warren Bell's splendid story, "Black Evans," will be interested in the announcement that at Harrow this term an experiment is to be made with Association football, in deference to a recommendation made by a committee which, I understand, was formed to inquire into the respective merits of the two codes. House matches on the League system will probably be arranged. The old order changeth, but it almost seemed that this year there was a great revival of popularity in the handling game, both among players and spectators alike. But there can be scarcely any doubt that Soccer has now got the greater grip on football lovers, and rival games like hockey and lacrosse have drawn more adherents from the Rugby game than they have from the sister code. And certainly among schools the tendency is more and more to turn towards the game with eleven a side.

On this page is reproduced a photograph of the Bedford School Fifteen, who this season have been very successful, and among whom are several players likely to win much renown in the football world after their schooldays are over. The photograph was sent me by Mr. A. Frank Jolly, to whom my most cordial thanks are due, and I should like to mention now that I am always pleased

Bedford School Fifteen

C. R. James, J. T. McVitie, A. F. Wemyss, A. V. Askwith, C. P. Emmett, W. G. Higgins.
E. E. Norton, B. K. Bird, R. V. Knight, (capt.), Mr. E. L. Chambers, H. B. H. Cox, H. B. Wilson, M. Milton,
J. W. Murdoch, R. F. Martyn, A. G. Hunter.

to receive from readers photographs of school interest, and to publish them whenever possible.

Below will be found a photograph of the Cardiff Captain Club Football Eleven, and I must add my congratulations to those of the Club Captain in wishing the Cardiff branch continued success. Further particulars of the team's good play in the league for which they have entered will be found in the club pages, and I sincerely hope that they will manage to get to the top of the table. But whether they do or not they have made a good fight, and that is the main thing.

The half-season report of the Old Leysian

The Cardiff Captain Club, 1911-1912.

S. Thomas, F. Owen, D. J[illegible], H. Coleman, S. Jelliman, W. Smith, E. Mayo, V. Davies (asst. sec.), H. Gardiner.
H. Edgar, H. Hart, E. Jones (sec.), M. Jackson, B. Ridgway (vice capt.), P. Guy, T. Coles (capt.), T. Avling.
A. Bird, J. Harris, J. Coles.

Photo, Raymond, Cardiff

Football Club is before me, and a very wonderful report it is. So far this season they have not met with a single defeat—the result of their meeting with the Harlequins on January 6th is not to hand as I write—and in eleven matches their line has only thrice been crossed. To their own credit stands a total of 219 points, and they have met such good clubs as the London Scottish, London Irish, Cambridge University, London Hospital, Old Alleynians, Old Millhillians, and Old Edwardians. If they overcome Guy's, Richmond, and Blackheath, they will indeed have proved themselves an invincible side.

"The Boys' Best."—Those Captainites who find it so hard to wait the whole month that elapses between the publication of the numbers of THE CAPTAIN cannot do better than employ the meantime in reading the *Boys' Best*. This new paper has achieved an extraordinary success, and one has not to seek far for the reason of it. Every number—it is published every Thursday—is an astonishing pennyworth of splendid reading, there being several serials and two or three short stories in each issue, besides a number of interesting and helpful articles. The *Boys' Best* is the very finest penny boys' weekly that has yet been published, and Captainites are advised to ask a newsagent for the current copy of it if they want some real good yarns to read.

One more number will complete this volume, and the March CAPTAIN will contain the closing chapters of the three serials which are now running. Messrs. Warren Bell, John Mackie, and Captain Benson have entertained us all vastly with their splendid stories, and doubtless all of you are wondering how the tales "end up," and what is the final result of the adventures that have occurred to the heroes of the

three tales. Well, I am certainly not going to anticipate matters by letting you into any secrets now; but I can assure you that the last instalments will be worthy of the good work that has preceded them. I like a story that keeps up its interest to the end, and I think that all THE CAPTAIN serials do that. I have taken special care to provide the March number with many a good feature. The short stories in it will be of the best, and there will be one or two articles of novel and particular interest. I have induced Mr. Edward W. Hobbs, M.J.I.C., to contribute an excellent article on "Model Yacht Racing," and I am sure a great many Captainites will look forward eagerly to this. There will be a splendid football story, and one or two fine adventure yarns; and altogether the March CAPTAIN will be a bumper number. And next month I will tell you all about the serials I have been fortunate enough to secure for the twenty-seventh volume.

"The Captain" Cot.—Any more post-cards, please? Post-cards? Don't you know what I mean? Don't you know that there has been established at the Lord Mayor Treloar's Home for Crippled Children a cot which is entirely supported by contributions from Captainites? Aren't you one of those who have promised to help it just a little bit?

Come now, it is not much that I ask of you. I want every Captainite to lend a hand in aid of this splendid work. Many a mickle makes a muckle. If all of you just promise to do ever so little to help the cause the result will be a splendid success, and THE CAPTAIN Cot will always be there to accommodate a poor little child of the slums who has not even the full use of his limbs wherewith to make a struggle with the world. The New Year has brought joy to many of you; it is full of prospects for you all. But there are hundreds and hundreds of children in the squalid parts of this great London of ours—this London which is the proudest city of the world—hundreds and hundreds who have no health and no happiness, and no chance of attaining one or the other unless the magic hand of charity reaches forth and lifts them gently where the rays of hope may shine. THE CAPTAIN is extending a hand now, a hand which will be blessed by many a crippled child, and Captainites are asked to see to it that that hand may never lose its strength, or be withdrawn. My appeal has been generously responded to by a great number of my readers; but there are still a great many more who could do noble work on behalf of THE CAPTAIN Cot. Are you one of those who have responded, or one of those who are going to? I feel sure you cannot be one of those poor spirits who do not wish to. Remember, it is not a big sum I am asking for, a sum the giving of which would mean long self-denial to you. All I want is a *post-card* saying that you will support THE CAPTAIN Cot; just a post-card and a promise to help.

I have told you before of the grand work done at the Lord Mayor Treloar's Home for Crippled Children at Alton; how poor children are taken in, attended to, and in a great number of cases cured; how they are all taught trades which, even in spite of their physical handicaps, will ensure them a living when they have grown up; how kindly they are treated and how carefully trained, and how gloriously made happy. It is a great and wonderful institution, and its scope is boundless. And now at this home there is established a CAPTAIN Cot, which is maintained solely by CAPTAIN readers, whose bounty will be repaid in full by the grateful memories of those little souls who because of it have been made whole and happy.

Won't *you* help THE CAPTAIN Cot?

Answers to Correspondents

GENERAL

"Linguist."—A foreign correspondent, if he combine good business qualities with linguistic power, can reasonably expect to achieve a good position. You would have to start as an assistant correspondent with some commercial house, and the salary would not be large; but your chances of bettering it would be fairly good, and £200 a year should not be a long way off, while if you have keen business capacity a much higher salary might be yours before many years. The language that you ought to attend to first is English; for in the course of your short letter I observe no less than half a dozen misspelt words. French, German, and Spanish are the foreign languages of most commercial value, and Portuguese and Russian come next.

E. Searle.—I do not much like to hear of fellows disliking their work, and if the prospects in the trade you are learning are good you should put your back into the work and try to reach a more

congenial stage in it. There is a term of unpleasant drudgery at the beginning of most people's career. Your weak arm would certainly diminish your chances of success at agriculture abroad. Find out exactly what prospects your trade offers, and, if they are good, work hard to realise them.

R. O'Reilly.—Of course there is science in both Rugger and Soccer, and no one claims a monopoly for either code. But every author may have a leaning to one or the other, and we must not mind if now and then he expresses his personal preference.

Acknowledgments and thanks are also due to "O. B.," George Martin, "One of the Old Brigade," J. Ralph Wolfe, D. E. Pithie, Aldyth Langdon, E. W. E., Walter Cornish, S. Philips, and to the many Captainites in all parts of the world who have sent me Christmas and New Year cards and greetings.

MODELS

P. W. P. (Malvern).—We cannot under any circumstances advise you to attempt converting a clockwork or electric model to a steam one. The superstructures are in no way suited to the proposed alteration.

STAMPS

H. P. B. (Howe) has a 4*d.* South Australia of the "long" series with the "F" of "Four" touching the left frame. This is the sort of variety which is very liable to occur in type-set stamps. Worth an extra space in one's album, perhaps, but probably of no great extra value.

H. T. K.—Yes, the beginning of a year is the ideal time to make a start in stamp collecting if one has decided to take only the new issues as they appear, and to ignore all the stamps of previous years. This form of philately, which, of course, has many advantages for the young beginner, was first adopted in 1901, when thousands of "New Century" collections were commenced, the idea being to collect everything issued as from January 1st, 1901, and not to concern one's self with the stamps of the previous sixty years. But the beginning of a year—any year—will do just as well as the beginning of a century; and if you are not at present a stamp collector, and would like to make a start on fairly cheap and easy lines, you might do worse than collect postage stamps issued from January 1st, 1912, onwards. Even in this "current" form of stamp collecting it would not be an easy matter to secure everything, so you will be wise to confine yourself to some section or group, such as the British Empire or a particular continent.

DO YOU WANT TO WIN A BILLIARD TABLE?

A SPLENDID COMPETITION FOR ALL CAPTAINITES.

FIRST PRIZE: A Magnificent Billiard Table (see Prizes Page).
SECOND PRIZE: Goods to the value of One Guinea.

And 20 Consolation Prizes.

Some little while ago a Captainite wrote and said that he had been doing his best to make The Captain even more widely read in his school than it had been before. He was a recent prize-winner, and thought that it was "up to him" to do something special in return. So he bought a few extra copies of the current number, and very carefully cut them up into single pages. Then, just before supper one night, he went swiftly round and placed a page by each plate, before any of his schoolfellows came in.

The result was excellent. Every fellow read his page—and whether it began a story or whether it was in the middle of one he found something interesting and exciting in it—and wanted more. Every boy tried to get from his neighbour the page that continued the tale, and, of course, seeing how widely the pages were distributed, he was mostly unsuccessful. Still the story *had* to be read to the finish, so the next day the local newsagent experienced an unusually heavy demand for The Captain, a demand which since then has been as regular as it has been heavy, and all thanks to the ingenuity of an enthusiastic Captainite.

Now if he could do a little thing like that with such success, you too could surely help in some similar manner. Can *you* think of any way of bringing The Captain prominently before the notice of your friends? You may be at school, you may be in business, or on holiday; but wherever you are, whatever your circumstances, you can think of some way of helping The Captain. Set your wits to work, and when you have accomplished your scheme and noticed with what success your endeavours have been crowned, write to the Competition Editor and fully describe

What you have done for "The Captain."

Send all the particulars and complete details, and remember that your letter must arrive not later than *Tuesday, March 12th*, 1912, and must be accompanied by the Competition Coupon cut from the Prizes page.

To the Captainite who convinces us that he made the best attempt to further the interests of The Captain, the first prize in this competition, a magnificent Riley billiard table, will be awarded, and the other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Competition Editor's decision must be accepted as final.

Address your envelopes, "February Competition," The Captain, 8, Southampton Street, Strand, W.C., and remember that they must be received not later than March 12th.

Look Pleasant, Please!

A Good Reason

"Oi'll work no more for that man Dolan."

"An' why?"

"Shure, an' 'tis on account av a remark he made."

"An' phwat was that?"

"Says he, 'Casey,' says he, 'ye're di-charged.'"

***

Which?

ONE day a farmer drove into town with a load of produce, and spent the rest of the day and part of the night with convivial companions. On his way home he fell asleep, and his wagon came in contact with a tree by the roadside, startling the horses into a burst of speed. They broke away and went clattering down the road. The farmer slept on. He was thus found next morning at daylight by a passer-by.

"Hello!" called out the stranger. "Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

The farmer peered up and down the road in a dazed way.

"Well," he said, "I'm Rogers, ain't I? And I've lost a jolly fine pair of horses."

Then he got down and inspected the vehicle.

"And if I ain't Rogers," he added, "I've found a jolly fine wagon."

The Very Thing

CHARLIE: "Some people are never satisfied to take things as they are, but always want to know th why and wherefore."

DICK: "That's a fact. I wonder why it is."

***

Strange Ignorance

THE Professor in the Corner: "I think there is nothing to beat 'The Passing of Arthur.'"

The Man in the Other Corner (interrupting): "Well, I never! Haven't either of you chaps seen Vivian Woodward play?"

***

COLD COMFORT

JACK (a bit dazed): "Did I do the figure eight all right?"
HARD-HEARTED FRIEND: "Well, I don't know exactly that it was an eight, but you cut a very pretty figure, anyhow!"

***

The Difference

A GOOD story is told of a once swell young officer who had been compelled by adverse circumstances to throw up the commission he held in a crack regiment and to enlist as a private soldier.

He found it difficult, however, to forget his former rank, and one day, on being ordered to perform some necessary duty with the spade, to which he strongly objected, he remonstrated:—

"But, sergeant," he drawled, "er—you—er—forget I've held His Majesty's commission, and——"

The sergeant cut him short.

"And now, young 'un, you've got to hold His Majesty's shovel."

Desperate as the chance was, it was the only one possible to save his life. He let go his hold of the wrecked 'plane, and dropped to the platform where Frank waited.

THE ONLY CHANCE*

A thrilling tale of a perilous aeroplane ride over a blazing prairie fire

By G. W. IVEY

THE evening was slowly drawing in, the last rays of the setting sun lingered lazily on the harvest-cleared slopes of Blake's Farm, and the women-folk bustled cheerily about putting the final touches to a long day's work.

In the porch of one of the squat, low timber buildings, an elderly woman stood looking across the plains, her attention directed to a light galloping vehicle that had just become discernible in the hazy distance.

"Frank," she called to her son, a strongly built lad of eighteen, "that's not your father coming?"

A few long, easy strides brought the boy to her side, and, placing an arm across his mother's shoulders, he raised his other hand to shade his eyes as he studied the object silhouetted dark against the reddening sun.

"No, mother, that's old Pete with the week's post-bags for the Creek for certain. Don't you worry about dad, though. There are plenty of reasons why he might be an hour or so late, and besides, what's going to happen to a man in the sixty miles 'tween here and the Bridge Siding?"

"It isn't like your dad to stop fooling 'round when he's got rid of his grain."

"You're fretting yourself for nothing at all, mother. Most likely he's paid the men off and let them free round town for a day or two. Anyway, he'd have to bank his money in the town, and then he'd go to the stores to buy you some little keepsake as a token of the biggest harvest in ten years."

George Blake had reaped a wondrous crop of grain that year, and, current prices being temptingly high, he had utilised the services of every horse, every farm-hand, and every vehicle at his call, to transport his produce sixty miles across prairie and forest land to the nearest railway depot, where he exchanged his grain for spot cash at a most remunerative rate.

For several weeks had these carting operations been in progress, and it was now just two days since the final consignment had left Blake Farm. Under ordinary circumstances the farmer and his men should have returned at noon that day, but at fall of twilight there was yet no sign of them.

Frank stepped to where he had a few minutes before tethered his mount, the only horseflesh remaining on the farm, jumped into the saddle, and trotted leisurely out to intercept the postman, as the latter passed the farm at a point on the track about half a mile distant.

He exchanged greetings with the driver of the mail-cart, and turned his horse and rode easily beside the clattering, springless wagon.

"You're missin' somethin'," grunted old Pete, with a malicious twinkle in his solitary optic. "Yer guvnor's on th' spree ter-night—won't be back on th' farm fer two days."

"How's that?" laughed Frank, whose imagination was not equal to an appreciation of his steady-going "guvnor" indulging in anything in the nature of a spree.

"Airy-planing show at Blue Rock ter-morrer," grunted the postman, with a side-long glance at Frank.

The boy whistled. He knew well that his father's only weakness was an intense longing to witness an aeroplane in flight. Two days—how moderate! Under the circumstances he would not have been surprised to hear of his father playing truant for a month. But what in the world had happened that there should be an aeroplane display at a backwoods town like Blue Rock?

His features almost spoke the question, for old Pete pulled his wagon to a standstill, and, searching amongst his few but capacious pockets, drew forth a greasy, tattered sheet that had once been a neatly folded unit of the *Blue Rock Eagle and Advertiser*.

The newspaper was still in sufficient preservation, however, for Frank to read the particulars of the morrow's event, and old Pete supplemented the same with a message from

* *All rights reserved.*

George Blake as to his intentions for spending the next few days.

Frank returned the precious news sheet to old Pete, handed him a few letters, and with a wave of his hand in farewell turned his horse's head back towards the farm buildings.

When he had ridden a few yards a shout from old Pete caused him to turn in his saddle, and with his hand to his straining ear, he caught a message, volunteered as an afterthought, warning him to "keep a sharp eye" on the southern hills, for forest fires had been heard of in that quarter during the previous day.

Frank then galloped in, his placid countenance relieving his mother's anxieties before he came within speaking distance. Dismounting, he led his horse to its stable, his mother following him as he rattled off the tidings Old Pete had brought from the farmer.

"Dad's settled up all his business at the Bridge Siding, received his reckoning of the Wheat Trust's Agent, and got it safely put away in the bank, so you've no further call to worry about his being knocked over the head for his bags of money, mother. This morning he heard of a grand flying machine display at Blue Rock, and he's gone over there for a couple of days to see the sights, and he has paid all the men and taken them with him as a treat.

"A young fellow from England, named Robart, has undertaken to demonstrate to the Canadian War Office the value of a new thing in aeroplanes he has invented, and he has brought with him five stalwart experts, each with a machine. His aeroplane, so he claims, will carry a crew of three—the pilot and two others; it contains a long platform for carrying stores, photographic apparatus, or bombs, and embodies many improvements which give more effectual control in rising and dropping than have ever yet been attained. The War Office have consented to witness an exhibition of his team of fliers, and have requested him to carry out a series of flights, observations, and manœuvres at Blue Rock."

Mrs. Blake's eyes opened wide with interest, and out of her generosity she said:—

"Well now, I don't wonder at your father going there. 'Twould be a shame to miss the opportunity. I wish I was there myself. What will be invented next, I wonder?"

Frank said nothing of the warning Old Pete had given about the fires, but before he retired that night he took a stroll round the outbuildings, and, with many a calculating glance at the southern horizon, he cast about in his mind for a possible line of defence to be adopted should the arch-enemy of the settler happen to come his way.

That night Frank slept heavily, but after some time he awoke suddenly with that strange sense of the presence of danger which many have experienced at the advent of disaster. He sprang quickly from his bed, and observing the sky ruddy with the glow of the rising sun, he glanced at his watch.

Half-past one—his timepiece must have stopped. He placed it against his ear, but its regular ticking told him of his error. But sunrise at half-past one!—he stepped to the window and then, beneath the ruddy light which he had attributed to a new day's sun, he saw a long, low line of fierce light extending the whole width of the southern horizon. It was a prairie fire.

No need to rub his eyes or cudgel his brains now. In incredible time he was dressed and booted, his sharp call awakened the slumbering inmates, and without flurry, but with every advantage of instinct and training, this boy and five women were making their preparations to meet the onrushing fire and do grim battle for their lives and home.

Frank scented the wind, and adjudged the direction of the fire's progress, and as he feared, his reckoning showed him that the farm lay fairly in the centre of the fiery waves' track. The extent of the blazing line was for miles each way, and it was no grass fire which might by dint of strenuous effort be kept at bay with wet sacks. It was many miles of forest well alight and, as Frank knew, nothing in its path could live.

The main portion of the wood came to within a quarter mile of the farm, and from this there jutted out like a spur a copse some 150 yards wide which reached within fifty feet of the farm buildings. Over this tiny gap the immense volume of flame would leap without pause or loss of vigour, and in a few moments after that Blake Farm would be a charcoal ruin. The danger of the proximity of this copse had always been in George Blake's mind, and to hew it down was a job he had been meaning to have accomplished for some years, but like most jobs that are postponed, the work had never been carried out, and now the penalty of the farmer's procrastination loomed up obvious and ugly.

Frank judged the fire still some forty miles away, and its speed and direction he knew must vary with the wind. If the wind held as it then was, two hours would see the total

destruction of the farm and all upon it, for there was no way of flight open to them. Behind rolled forest and prairie for hundreds of miles, and no matter how far they might pursue a fugitive course, they could not hope to outdistance the fire.

To right and left there spread the cultivated lands of the farm, but any attempt to turn the flank of the fire was rendered equally hopeless by the obvious length of its front, and moreover, only one horse was left on the farm.

No, clearly the lives of all at Blake's Farm were in the hands of Providence. A temporary fall of wind might give them time to outflank the fire, a change of wind might guide the blaze on to another course; but only an entire calm of several days could put them quite out of danger and save the farmhouse.

And even while they watched and debated in low, awed tones, Providence granted these harassed souls a respite, for the wind was felt to lower, and, after a few fitful gusts, a perfect calm reigned, and although the watchers could not observe any difference in the distant red line of death, they knew that while the lull lasted, the flames would approach but little nearer.

The farm cattle in their paddocks and stables had scented the fire, despite its great distance, and were galloping excitedly round the paddocks, and stamping and lowing in the sheds. Frank decided to liberate them. There seemed no hope of saving them on the farm, and were they to break loose when the fire was at close quarters they would themselves become a dangerous element. So he threw open gates and doors, and with one accord the cows, bulls, and sheep galloped off, loudly voicing their fear and anger at the common enemy, and, by virtue of their strength and speed, having a far greater chance of ultimate safety than the human beings they left behind them.

"Frank," said Mrs. Blake, "there is but one chance for us. You must jump up on Bob, and try to win through the fire to Blue Rock. The girls and I will start right now and try to walk round the west flank of the fire. Your father will have seen the fire, which I expect has passed just north of the town, and he will be trying to get through with spare mounts for us. When you meet him, tell him our plans, and if the wind does not rise again too soon he may be in time to pick us up."

Frank knew that in his mother's advice lay the best chance, if any chance there were, of rescue, and, his heart almost bursting, he drew his mother into his arms for a moment, and then, with set jaws, saddled his horse and galloped towards the fire, not knowing whether the next few hours might not leave either his mother or himself—perhaps both—a charred and blackened corpse.

The women waited for nothing, but empty-handed abandoned their home and all their belongings, and marched off at a forced pace westwards into the sullen night.

Blue Rock was about ten miles to the east of Bridge Siding, and almost equidistant with the latter—sixty miles—from Blake Farm. Straight in the direction of the town Frank spurred his mount, casting over in his mind for a route by which he might break through the line of blazing forest. The ordinary road he knew would be impassable, for it plunged through the thickest part of the forest; but he remembered a gully, a sort of freak dip, about a score of yards wide and several miles long, rocky and free from vegetation. If he could but gain the mouth of the gully before the flames closed over the entrance, its depths might form a pass right through the burning belt and bring him out in the rear of its devastating track.

For several hours he rode his hardest, ever watching for a rise of wind, and at last, as the dawn crept up behind the fire, he saw, two miles in front of him, the gully's mouth still open.

Hardly did he realise this, however, when, without warning, the wind again rose, and in quick response the edge of the fire leaped towards him. It was a race now for the dip; Frank called to his jaded horse for a game try, and the noble beast replied with his utmost strength.

Closer and closer did man and fiery element draw towards the vital point, and as Frank approached his goal he was met by leaping, jumping shoots of flame which first flew along the dry top foliage over his head, then seized the twigs, and, ever increasing its hold, gripped the larger branches of the trees, and by the time Frank at last entered the gully he rode between spurting and hissing jets of fire, his horse terrified at the walls of flame which threatened to engulf him, and only kept on his course by the steady will and iron hand of his strong young rider.

From its entrance the gully dipped sharply, and as Frank rode down into its welcome, sheltering depths, he saw the main body of the fire rush by over him along the crests which bounded the edges of the gorge, and he knew

that his entry into this tunnel of fire was not one minute too soon. But with thoughts of the women's peril always in his mind, he rode on without slackening pace any more than the rudeness of his path forced upon him, and after another few miles were covered he left the holocaust behind him, and soon after, rising from the gully, he rode over the smoking ground, through a maze of smouldering tree-stumps—the remains of the forest land just devastated by the fire.

Barely had he left the gorge when he descried horsemen galloping towards him, and he reined up amidst a smother of sparks and ashes as his father and a dozen others halted in the smoke beside him.

Question and answer rapped out quickly and alertly, as is the wont of men when their loved ones are in peril, but Frank's account of the fire's course showed how hopeless it was to retrace the path he had travelled.

Equally futile all knew it to be to endeavour to reach the women by outflanking the fire, which was now travelling as fast as a horse could gallop. The women had, at the most, a few hours' grace before the fire would overtake them; and how could man or horse travel fifty miles in the time?

The case seemed hopeless, and George Blake, and the men whose wives were with his wife, sat mute, with tragic despair in each man's eyes.

A sharp staccato throbbing above their heads forced their attention to the heavens, and circling round in the sky was a peculiarly graceful craft. The airman saw them, and brought his machine to the ground with an elegant volplane, and, with the intuition of the forlorn hope, George Blake recognised and called to him.

"Man, can your machine do all you claim for it?"

"It will do more to-night," said the young man who stepped from the pilot's seat, "if you can tell me where to direct my efforts. I've brought her out on rescue work."

"There are five women fifty miles the other side of that furnace. To reach them you must travel thirty miles an hour. Can you do it?"

"Yes, give me the proper bearings—or better still"—he turned to Frank—"do you think you're funky?" he asked. "If not, come with me; you'll be useful."

"My mother's over there," said Frank quietly, jerking his head towards the receding fire belt, and he threw his reins to one of his father's men and stepped straight on to the aeroplane's platform, which ran from behind the pilot's seat to the rearmost plane.

Despite his terrible anxiety, George Blake could not repress a momentary feeling of envy as he saw his son offered an experience for which, at any other time, he himself would have given a team of his best horses.

Frank caught his involuntary glance of disappointment, and quickly set his father at ease. "Your weight would tell against the speed, dad, at a pinch."

"Aye, aye, boy," said the farmer, "you'll be of more use to your new mate than should I, for my wits are not so alert as they were thirty years ago. Be off with you now, and that you may be in time is my only wish."

The stranger resumed his seat, and directing Frank to take up his position immediately behind him so that he could talk over his shoulder, he started his engine, and the machine ran swiftly along the ground for a very few yards, its wheels raising a cloud of smoke and sparking ashes, and then gently lifted and climbed high into the air above the heads of the group they left behind them.

"Robart is my name," said the flying man, "and yours is——?"

"Frank Blake. I was wondering whether you were Robart himself, or one of his assistants."

"How many women have we to pick up?"

"Five."

"I must find my other men then. Each of my six 'planes will carry two beside the pilot, so that we shall have space to spare for any other unfortunates we may find."

He rose rapidly higher and higher in ever-widening circles, and so he continued until, about nine hundred feet above the ground, they descried by the light of the brightening dawn two other aeroplanes, cruising swiftly along the rear of the fire. Robart speedily flew towards them, and as they saw him they turned to meet him.

"Take that megaphone," said Robart to Frank, "and tell the man in front to fall behind and follow us; and the man on the right to get into touch with the other three men, and then all to come on after us as fast as they can. Give him our course."

Frank detached the speaking trumpet from the straps which held it secure, and transmitted Robart's instructions, which were readily understood.

"And tell them to cross the fire area at as great an altitude as they can reach, for goodness only knows what tricks the heat will play with the air currents."

Robart and his consort were now rising higher and higher, until the band of fire below and in front of them, although several miles in width, looked no more than a red-hot band a few yards wide at the most But this band was now travelling at a speed of thirty miles an hour, and in spite of their superior speed of nearly fifty it took them quite twenty minutes to cross it and leave it in their rear, for the atmosphere was very difficult to negotiate, and it took Robart many a nicely calculated sweep and manœuvre to keep his balance and maintain his speed.

Once in front of the blazing line they dropped quickly, and were soon able to leave the raging holocaust well in their rear. When, an hour later they sighted the deserted buildings of Blake Farm, the fire was still twenty miles distant, and the other four aeroplanes could be seen quickly coming along, all having crossed the fire in safety.

They now turned abruptly to the west, and after another twenty miles had been covered they overtook and alighted by the astonished fugitives. The women had been walking for over five hours, and, although not yet exhausted, had despaired of any other chance of rescue than the fall of the wind, for in spite of their having travelled for twenty miles in a parallel course to the fire-front, its extremity was even now not in sight, and at its appalling speed the fire would have been upon them in less than half an hour.

As the aeroplane glided easily to earth Frank sprang out and ran to his mother, who, being much the oldest of the women, was feeling sorely the strain of this forced but hopeless march. For a few moments he let her rest in his arms, whilst Robart gave sharp, concise orders for the disposal of the women among his fleet.

Wishing to keep as many machines as possible free for further eventualities, he put the full complement of two passengers each on to two of the platforms, and sent them on their way, the poor women being in too much terror of their peril from the fire to worry about the comparatively slight risk of the journey in their novel chariots.

Mrs. Blake he persuaded to travel in a third machine, Frank he kept with himself, and two machines were left unhampered.

Frank entered the gully between spurting and hissing jets of fire, his horse terrified at the walls of flame which threatened to engulf him.

The three machines with the women passengers did not attempt to recross the fire, but continued their flight in a westerly direction, knowing that with their advantage of speed over the onrushing fire they could keep well in front of it, and that eventually they must discover its lateral limit and turn its flank without risk.

Robart and the two free machines, however, turned to meet the flames, for they wished to

get back to Blue Rock as quickly as might be, and learn whether there were other opportunities for their aid.

Up, up, up, and still up they forced their way against the wind, and when they met the fringe of the blaze they had attained the immense height of 11,000ft. This time they crossed the blazing area in four or five minutes, but hardly had they passed over the conflagration when Frank noticed that whereas one aeroplane was riding steadily in front, the other was dragging far behind them. He told Robart, who, with a wide circular sweep, retraced his course and made for the laggard.

As they drew near they missed the expected noisy throb of the engine, and another second's observation showed them that the pilot, being unable to make his engine work, had no other resort than to plane to the ground.

This he started to do, manipulating his planes in the endeavour to carry himself to the rear of the fire, over the very centre of which he was at the time suspended, but even as he made the attempt his rudder control snapped with a clear, stinging note, like a broken harp-string; the machine lost its equilibrium, heeled over, and then plunged headlong earthward like a bird on the wing mortally wounded.

Not for a second did Robart hesitate, but, stopping his engines, he depressed his planes and followed his pupil in the shocking 11,000 feet race to the earth.

Down, down they went, at a speed not to be measured in words. The weight of Robart's passenger told, however, and in perhaps five, perhaps eight, nine, or ten seconds, he had shot past and under the falling 'plane. The pilot's intuition rose to the occasion, Robart's purpose flashed across his brain, and as the other 'plane hung poised for a moment 20ft. or so beneath him, he slipped from his perpendicular seat, released his hold of his wrecked plane, and, risking his already forfeited life, he hurled himself at the steeply tilted platform whereto clung Frank in readiness for the venture.

His judgment was true to a nicety, and he landed almost softly on the receding platform of Robart's aeroplane, which under his added weight rushed even more speedily downwards, but thus averted the danger of the derelict 'plane falling on their heads. Robart restarted his engine, and then grimly waited to see what would happen—would the propeller get its grip of the air and restore to the plane its lost stability before they had dropped the remaining 6,000ft. into the seething furnace directly below them?

Under his orders Frank and the rescued pilot climbed to the end of the platform, weighing down the rear of the machine and bringing up her head a trifle, but still she fell at an alarming rate, or rather, as it seemed to them, the inferno below rushed up to meet them, widening as it rose.

Only a thousand feet more to fall, a few seconds would decide it. The air grew hotter and hotter, smoke-clouds and showers of sparks flew past them, the tallest of the flames licked the wings of the machine, and each man breathed an involuntary prayer and composed himself to face his death.

And then, when the 'plane, shooting earthwards with meteor-like rapidity, was but 500ft. from the ground and not a hundred from the tops of the tallest of the blazing trees, the propeller bit the wind, the machine heaved, shuddered — plunged and heaved again — the two passengers raced forward, and slowly, tremulously, and labouring like a ship against the tremendous buffetings of an ocean storm, the aeroplane reasserted its control of the air and bravely bore its human freight to safety, whilst behind them crashed to fiery destruction the machine which had so recently ridden the clouds with the pride of a live bird.

An hour later they descended at Blue Rock, and, not long after, Frank and his parents were reunited. A few months later Robart and his team received their reward, when his improved machines were recognised and adopted by the Canadian War Department.

MODEL YACHT RACING

By Edward W. Hobbs. M.J.I.E.

BUT few people realise the extent and popularity of model yacht sailing as a sport. Some imagine it to be merely an idle pastime of the feeble-minded; others, again, consider it but an amusement for the boys. These are, however, mistaken notions, for model yacht sailing has existed as a serious sport for fifty years and more. There are clubs in London and in the provinces who have carried on model sailing uninterruptedly for the past half-century. A slight consideration of the proposition shows, moreover, that there are many serious reasons to account for the value and standing of model yachting.

In the first place, model yacht sailing embodies the essentials of a sound sport, in that it calls for skill on the part of the competitor; it trains his powers of observation, and develops the use of his hands.

The competitor who would succeed in the sport must take note of the direction and strength of the wind, and any peculiarities of the surroundings likely to affect the boat's sailing.

He must also be nimble with his hands, to trim and set the sails, or to oil and tend his engines.

At the present time there are some 120 model yacht clubs spread over Great Britain, and there are also clubs in most British possessions "beyond the seas," as well as others on the Continent. To draw these clubs into closer touch, and to provide for model yacht races on league lines, an association of the clubs has been formed, and is known as the Model Yacht Racing Association, with headquarters at 112, High Holborn, London, W.C.

The illustration above shows an historic event; it is the start of the first National Inter-Club Regatta for 12-metre model sailing yachts under M.Y.R.A. rules. These races were held at Forest Gate on October 7th, 1911, and were attended by model yacht clubs from many parts of the country and London. The racing resulted in a win for *Silverheels III.*, a splendid boat belonging to the Portsmouth Model Yacht Club.

It is interesting to note that these models are all correctly designed and built on exactly similar principles to their larger sisters—proper drawings have to be first prepared before the boats can be made. To the intelligent lad with a knowledge of carpentry the construction of a model sailing yacht is much to be recommended as a winter pastime; the work is interesting, the cost low, and the result only limited by the care and skill of the builder, many home-made models sailing as well as, or better than, some shop-bought articles, and being frequent prize-winners. Space in this article, however, does not allow of a lengthy description of the construction of a model yacht.

To the mechanically minded the racing model power boat possesses a peculiar fascination. Until one has actually built one's own model it is hard to realise the great attraction and fascination in watching the little craft racing across the pond under a full head of steam with the bow waves curving away in a smother of white foam. The picture of *Baby*, Mr. Davis's metre boat, gives a good impression of speed—she is travelling at nearly ten miles per hour.

The cost of a really fast and well-made model power boat need not be excessive or prohibitive. There is a choice of three motive powers, viz., electricity, which is only suitable for scale models or slow speeds; petrol boats, driven by a small petrol motor, similar to the *Baby*; and steam. There are, of course, many different methods of applying these different motive powers; but one of the most simple and easy methods for the amateur builder is indicated in Fig. 3, which shows diagrammatically the general arrangement of the parts in a fast model steamboat. Such a model would probably be made to race under M.Y.R.A. rules, and would measure either 1 metre (39⅜ins.) overall, or 1½ metres (58⅞ins.) overall. The beam in the former size (Class *a*) would be not more than 7⅞ins., and in the latter (Class *b*) 11½ins.; the weights being respectively 12lbs. and 25lbs. The hulls could readily be constructed from pine planks 1in. in thickness, cut to shape, cemented, and sewn with copper wire; afterwards being finally finished to shape.

The engine "A" should receive first attention, and many useful types are illustrated by

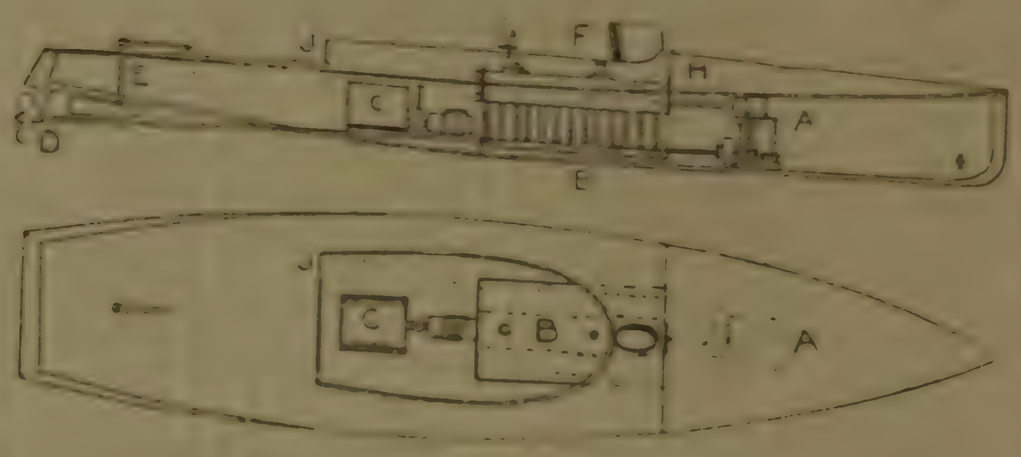


FIG. 3.

advertisers in THE CAPTAIN. The engine shown in Fig. 3 is the "Simplex," with cylinder ⅜×⅝, and can be obtained from Bassett-Lowke Ltd., ready made, or partly machined, and be finished by the owner. This latter course is to be commended, as it gives one more insight into the practical side of model boating. After the engine the boiler, B, should receive attention. There are numerous patterns available, some useless, some usable; but the type shown in the drawing, and known as the "Yarrow"—being similar to the boilers so frequently fitted to large torpedo-boats and destroyers—is one of the best, and although it requires some patience in making, it is a very fast steamer, and repays the time necessary for its construction. Such a boiler would have to be built of solid drawn copper tubing with cast gun-metal or spun copper ends, and all joints would have to be

FIG. 2.—The model motor-boat *Baby* travelling at ten miles an hour.

properly brazed. The fittings should comprise main steam valve, of the screw-down type as at G, and a "Perfect" safety valve, F. A water-gauge and steam-blower, also a check valve, should be fitted, the latter to enable the use of a feed-pump to supply water to the boiler while steam is up.

The boiler proper would be enclosed in a light sheet-iron casing lined with asbestos millboard, to prevent loss of heat by radiation; a substantial funnel being fitted at the forward upper end of the casing. A petrol blow-lamp is really the most reliable and safe method of raising steam, and consists of a strong tubular brass container, C, with ends brazed, or beaded and soldered on. This container is provided with a pump and pressure-gauge to indicate the pressure of air pumped into the tank to force the petrol through the vaporising pipe, which is coiled around the burner tube, and terminates in a fine nipple situate at the inner end of this tube. The vaporising coils must first be heated to a dull red heat; the petrol is then turned on, and is converted into gas by the heat of the pipe, and issues from the nipple in the form of a spray inducing a current of air through the burner tube, which ignites at its outer end, and burns with a clear blue, smokeless, and odourless flame. The engine, it will be noticed, is situated in the bows of the boat, and drives a two-bladed propeller by a long propeller-

shaft, supported at its outboard end by a bracket, D. A rudder is fitted between the shaft and the hull, as shown at E, a simple tiller and rack serving to control its movement. To prevent spray from washing on board, a movable metal hood is fitted over the forepart of the vessel, and hinged, as at H. A coaming, J, surrounds the boiler space for the same reason.

Such a model as the one here described would well repay its construction, and would provide excellent sport. In fact, at the Autumn Regatta held on October 21st last year at the Long Pond, Clapham, under the Model Yacht Racing Association's auspices, some forty model power boats competed for a series of valuable silver challenge cups and other prizes. There were six different events in all: Event A, for Metre Restricted Racers, won by *Noble Minor* (Bristol M.Y.C.), a little steam-driven hydroplane. Event B., 1½-Metre Restricted Racers, won by *Great Bear* (North Middlesex M.N.S.). Event C., Steering Competition, competitors having to aim at a target of coloured flags, won by *Alexandra* (Victoria M.S.C.). Event D, for Unrestricted Racers under 4ft., won by *Baby* (Victoria M.S.C.) (Fig. 2). Event E, Unrestricted Racers under 5ft. 6ins., won by *Alexandra*. She completed the course of 100yds. in thirty seconds, making a splendid performance. Event F was a "spectacular race," the prize being awarded to the best characteristic model boat; won by *Carltonian* (Clapham S. & S.C.), a fine liner 9ft. 6ins. long, and complete in every respect.

It can readily be imagined that as a sport model yachting, either with sailing yachts or power-driven models, provides excellent means for pleasurable recreation and amusement, and this year will without doubt bring many more recruits to this pastime.

Cross-Country Running

FROM various causes the popularity of cross-country running has for some years been on the wane, but the prophets are predicting an early revival of this once flourishing sport, which it cannot be denied is one of the freshest and most stimulating of all outdoor pastimes.

It calls for great endurance, and the beginner should attempt only short runs at first; but a fair pace should be maintained from beginning to end of the run, with a sprint at the finish if it can be managed. Two such runs a week, or three at the most, are all that should be taken. Many runners cover part of the distance flat-footed, to give relief to the muscles used in running on the toes. The knees should not be lifted high when running; economy of effort is the keynote of the long-distance runner.

THE BEST KIT

As regards dress, a pair of rather short knickers should be worn, and a thin vest of wool or woollen mixture, with a sweater outside. Woollen stockings should reach to just below the knee, and the shoes should give plenty of room for the feet, without, of course, being large enough to cause slipping. The soles should be substantial, or roughness of the ground will hurt the feet. As to whether spikes should be worn, this depends on the nature of the course; but it is generally safer to have them, as they are valuable in slippery weather, and a perfectly smooth sole invariably involves a certain amount of wasted effort.

PAPER-CHASING

In paper-chases the hares are usually given ten minutes start, which is quite sufficient, for unless the hounds have a fair chance of catching them the zest of the chase is not sustained, while the hares can gain time by laying false scents. The hares should have some notion of the route they intend to follow, or valuable time may be lost through indecision. When the hounds lose the scent they should at once spread out in all directions, and when it is found a whistle or an agreed call should be sounded. The hares should go out with bags tightly packed with paper for laying the scent, and a thin but almost continuous trail should be laid. A well-conducted paper-chase, over a course that is not long enough to exhaust the runners before the finish, makes for the winter months one of the most exhilarating of sports.

"CLEAR LEAD."

The Tiger of Batol.

A Story of Peril and Adventure in the China Seas.

By CAPT. RICHARD BENSON.

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN THE STORM BROKE

IN the thick storm dusk the Malay's eyes glowed red like smouldering coals. He came crawling like a snake across the planking—so slowly that Austin at first believed that he was doing it on purpose, in order to more thoroughly gloat over his vengeance.

A white blaze of electric fire stabbed the gloom, throwing out the whole scene in intense relief, and Austin saw that he was mistaken. Kwala was hurt. The blow that had been dealt him, and his fall on the hard planking, had evidently damaged him considerably. He was dragging his left leg as if it was either broken or sprained.

This was the reason why he could not move faster.

But it was only a moment's respite. His purpose was evident. There was no mistaking the fiendish desire for vengeance in his cruel brown face.

Austin glanced despairingly around. Men there were in plenty on the deck, but every single one of them running in frantic haste to obey the orders which Stark was bellowing in a voice which rivalled the pealing thunder.

The storm was very close. Already the air was full of that strange moaning sound which precedes the worst type of electric tempest.

Austin opened his mouth to shout for help, but at that moment the thunder-clap following the last flash smote sea and sky with a deafening roar.

The Malay, dragging his injured leg behind him, crawled steadily nearer. Movement was evidently intensely painful, for his lips were twisted crookedly, and huge drops of perspiration had started from his lean, brown forehead.

Austin struggled convulsively to free himself, but the effort was quite useless. The strands of coir which were knotted round his wrists were tough as raw hide, and the only result of his attempt was to cut the flesh till it bled.

The Malay saw the hopelessness of Austin's struggles, and an evil grin contorted his face. He gripped the crooked-bladed knife more firmly, and dragged himself obstinately nearer to his intended victim.

Austin gave up hope, and lay still, breathing heavily. If he had to die, at any rate he would not show the white feather.

The moaning had increased to a sound like the hoot of a thousand fog-horns. The thick, hot air was full of glittering flashes of lightning, which struck the sea in a dozen places at once, and twisted across the gloomy heavens like fiery snakes, while the thunder was no longer separate peals, but one continual ear-splitting roar.

Kwala was almost within arm's reach. Austin saw his lips moving, but the bellow of the thunder entirely drowned his words.

Another foot. Austin held his breath. Kwala was raising his knife. The bright steel gleamed blue in the fiery blaze of the lightning.

Then, without warning, the first blast of the storm struck the ship, like a blow from a giant's fist. The wind, rushing along the surface of the sea like a solid wall, caught the schooner broadside on, and literally hurled her on to her beam ends.

What happened Austin hardly knew. He had a vague idea that some dark object flew right over him, and then he himself was rolling over and over like a barrel down the deck, which lay at an angle resembling that of the roof of a house, and next moment brought up heavily against the rails.

Here he lay helpless and half stunned. Salt water dashed over him in sheets, the din was terrific, and he fully believed that the ship was done for, and that under the incredible force of the gale she would presently heel right over and capsize.

So without doubt she would have done, but for Stark's precautions. Whatever the huge ruffian's moral deficiencies, he was at any rate a splendid seaman, and his crew of cut-throats backed him ably.

Presently Austin felt the deck rise beneath him, the schooner's head came up into the wind, and she lay to while the great gale roared across her and the thunder bellowed and crackled overhead.

The weight of the wind was so tremendous that at first there was no sea at all. But the air was full of sheets of spray picked up by the gale and carried horizontally across the surface of the water.

Also it was as dark as night except for the constant and vivid blaze of lightning.

Presently Austin recovered himself sufficiently to look round. The lightning showed him the giant form of Stark at the wheel. The Black Flag chief stood facing the storm, a towering and impressive figure, controlling the bucking wheel with an ease which was amazing even in one of his tremendous strength.

Of Kwala he could at first see nothing. But presently he made out a shapeless bundle lying in the scuppers a dozen feet away, and another flash made him sure that it was the Malay.

Powerless for harm for the moment, at any rate; and for the first time for many minutes Austin had a gleam of hope that his own life would be spared.

But it was a gleam which passed almost as quickly as it had come. Though the first furious blast had passed, it was now blowing with a steady fury that Austin had never seen equalled, and the sea rose every moment.

The motion of the schooner became terrific. Now her bow seemed to point straight to the lurid sky, next moment she stood almost on her head, and as she dropped bow foremost down a huge hill of black water it seemed that she could never recover herself, but must drive straight down into the depths that yawned to receive her.

The seas began to break aboard in cataracts, and presently a rush of milk-warm water gushed over Austin, nearly drowning him.

With a violent struggle which left him breathless and panting, he got his back against the rail, but without hands to help himself he was presently flung down again on his back, and another surge swept across him, rolling him over and over towards the stern.

Plucky as he was, Austin gave way to despair. There was no help for him. If he was not drowned first it was only a question of time before the decks were swept, and he, with everything else movable, washed overboard.

Ah, here it came!

A terrific pitch, and a curling comber, its great crest livid white against the lowering sky, reared itself over the bow, and fell with a crash that made every timber quiver. It swept aft, and a roaring blackness swallowed up Austin, and he felt himself lifted bodily and carried away at dizzy speed towards the stern.

Then came a thud that racked every bone and sinew in his tortured body. A spray of brilliant stars seemed to break and drift before his eyes, and he knew no more.

* * * * * *

If Austin had been able to feel any emotion when he awoke again it would have been one of intense surprise to find himself alive.

But, as a matter of fact, he had been so badly damaged by his collision with the gun mountings which had saved him from being swept overboard by the great wave that when he began to regain his senses his mind was for a time a perfect blank, and he lay quite still with his eyes closed.

Slowly the power of thought came back, and the first thing that he realised was that the place he was lying in was comparatively still. He was still aboard ship, for he could feel a gentle heaving beneath him, but either the storm was over or the schooner lay in some sort of harbour.

The next idea that came to him was that the air was unpleasantly close and musty. Also by degrees he realised that he was in the same clothes which he had worn at the time of the storm, for they were still wet and sticky with salt.

Presently he managed to open his eyes. There was just light enough to see his surroundings. It came from a thick glass scuttle overhead, and he found that he was the solitary occupant of a small and abominably dirty and untidy cabin—a cabin which resembled a cell rather than anything else.

He was lying on a filthy straw mattress on the floor of this little square prison, and to make the resemblance to a prison cell more perfect he saw nothing else in the way of furniture except a common tin jug full of water.

His hands were no longer tied, and he reached out for the jug and drank greedily. His throat was like a lime-kiln, and though the fluid was tepid and stagnant it was the most refreshing draught he ever remembered.

The movement sent a stab of pain through his head, and reaching up he found his hair matted with blood. He had evidently had a bad cut on the scalp. Slowly and carefully he straightened his legs and arms. Every muscle in his body was so sore and stiff that movement was agony, but he was grateful to find that no bones were broken.

Too utterly weary to care much what happened, he dropped back on his mattress, and almost instantly fell asleep.

How long he slept he had no idea, but he was wakened by the click of a key in the lock. The door opened, and Stark, stooping to avoid striking his head against the lintel, entered the cabin.

As he straightened himself the crown of the peaked cap he wore almost brushed the ceiling.

He stared down at Austin with a curious expression in his hard grey eyes.

"Wal, I'm hanged!" he remarked in his harsh American drawl. "The critter's alive."

"No thanks to you," returned Austin, shortly.

"What are ye kicking about, sonny?" said Stark, with a grim smile. "Ain't your quarters good enough?"

"I'm not kicking about my quarters, but about the way you left me lying tied on the deck at the mercy of that Malay brute."

"Ho, so that's your trouble, is it?" chuckled Stark, with horrible mirth. "Aye, Kwala don't love you anything to speak of. I reckon he'd hev put a couple of inches o' cold iron between your ribs if he'd had a chance."

"You gave him the chance," retorted Austin. "If it hadn't been for the storm coming when it did I should have been cold meat by now."

"You don't have to worry about that. You'll be cold meat time enough if Heritage don't fork up the dollars, and don't you forget it."

"So that's your little game?" said Austin, scornfully. "Then the sooner you murder me the better, for you'll wait a long time before you get a brass farthing as ransom for me."

"I kin wait, pardner," said Stark, with a significant grin. "Wait a sight easier than yew can, I reckon."

"There won't be much waiting about it if you don't send me some food pretty soon," said Austin, staring coolly at the giant. "That is if you think I'm worth more alive than dead."

Stark gave a hoarse laugh.

"Yew've got grit right enough, sonny," he said. "Yew'd ought to be one of us. All right, I'll send ye along some victuals. And arter that we'll hev a talk about this here matter o' ransom."

Austin breathed more freely when the Black Flag chief had left the cabin. The man was brute right through, yet with the one human virtue—he appreciated pluck. And Austin, realising this from the first, congratulated himself that he had managed to play the part which he had set himself to play, and only hoped that he would be able to carry it through.

One thing he had made up his mind about—that, if he could help it, Heritage should not pay a penny piece of ransom to this gang of robbers and cut-throats.

Stark kept his word about the food. A few minutes later a Chinese steward came in with a tray on which was a good chunk of bully beef, some ship's biscuit, a tin pot of hot coffee, and—better still—a couple of ripe bananas.

Austin thanked the man civilly, but the Chinaman's expression did not change in the least.

Austin was surprised to find how hungry he was. He finished every scrap of the rough meal, and felt a hundred per cent. better. He thought that, if he could only get a wash he would be almost his own self again.

The schooner, he was sure, was lying at anchor. He could hear steps on the deck overhead, and occasionally shouted orders, but where they were or what was happening he had no means of finding out, for his prison had no porthole.

Presently he lay down and deliberately went

to sleep again. He felt fairly certain that he had a rough time ahead, and that it would be as well to store up as much energy as possible against it.

Once more he was roused by the click of the lock, and as before Stark was his visitor.

"Wal, Britisher, if yew've had your sleep out, yew'd best come ashore. I'm doing yew the honour of introducing yew to my island. It ain't got pearls, like yourn, but it ain't without its advantages, as yew'll see before long."

"I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you," said Austin, drily. "I only hope that your islanders will treat me better than ours did you."

Stark scowled. Plainly he was still sore at his recent defeat.

"I reckon they'll teach you to keep a civil tongue between your teeth afore they're done with you," he growled. "Now you follow me. And don't go trying any of your tricks, like you did before, or there'll be gun-play this time."

"There would, if you gave me anything to shoot with," remarked Austin, as coolly as ever.

He held out the pen to Austin, and said, "It don't do to play tricks with Captain Stark, you'll find."

Stark made no reply. He opened the cabin door and walked out into the alley-way. Austin followed him, and they passed through the main cabin, where the remains of a meal lay on the table, and up the companion on to the deck.

The first thing that struck Austin was the curiously deep shadow which lay upon the ship. He glanced round quickly.

The vessel lay at anchor in what appeared to be the bottom of a crater. Gigantic cliffs of ragged black rock towered skywards on every side. At a rough estimate Austin judged them to be at least a thousand feet high.

The area of the lake in which the schooner lay was not more than three or four acres, and at first Austin could not conceive how she had got there.

But glancing round astern he saw an opening in the lofty cliffs, a rift so narrow that it hardly appeared possible for a vessel the size of the schooner to pass through it.

This channel curved so that it was impossible to get a sight of the open sea. But the slight swell that rolled inwards was plain proof that that there was communication between the lake and the ocean.

Stark saw Austin's expression of surprise, and gave a deep chuckle.

"Mighty snug little harbour, ain't it? I reckon it 'ud take more than a Dreadnought to tackle this here outfit."

Austin made no reply.

"Now you'll come ashore, young feller. And jest in case of accidents we'll put a bandage over your eyes. Though fer that matter, ef your boss don't fork out the dollars, yew'll be apt to come down the cliff a mighty sight quicker than yew go up."

Austin fully understood the threat. Stark meant that, if he was not ransomed, he would be pitched over the cliff into the sea.

However, it was no use bandying words with the brute. He submitted quietly to being blindfolded, and was then taken ashore in a boat.

As soon as his feet touched firm ground a rope was put round his body, and he was lifted into the air.

He heard the creaking of a winch, and after a long interval of swinging in mid-air again found his feet. Two men took hold of him, and he was half driven, half dragged up a long, steep slope.

When his bandage was removed he found himself in a small, stone-built cell. The door was locked upon him and he was left alone.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ORDEAL BY ROPE

IT was about an hour after sunrise next morning that Stark entered Austin's prison and dumped down on the rough wooden bench which, with a hammock, was the only furniture of the place, a common little writing-case, together with an ink-pot and pen.

"Naow, Mr. Chesney, I'll hev to trouble yew to do a bit of writing fer me," he observed, with mock politeness. "Yew'll be good enough to set right down and send a letter to Captain Heritage, saying ez yew is enjoying my hospitality fer the time being, and thet ef he wants yew back at Sunshine Island it's going to cost him a little trifle in the way of pearls."

Austin looked up calmly into the leering face of the brigand.

"You can do your own dirty work, Mr. Stark, or Burnett, or whatever your name is. I'm not going to write a word."

A gleam of fury crossed Stark's face, making its expression absolutely terrifying. In that moment Austin fully realised why he had been named the "Tiger of Batol."

"It ain't no manner of use your trying to bluff me," growled Stark. "What yew got to recollect is thet yew're in my power, and thet what I sez goes. Set down now, and write as I tells yew."

"When you've known me a little longer," said Austin, smoothly, "you will realise that when I say a thing I mean it."

"I reckon our acquaintance will come to a mighty sudden end if yew don't obey orders," answered Stark, controlling his anger with an evident effort. "It don't pay to try tricks with Captain Stark, and so yew'll find afore yew're much older."

As he spoke he took out a sheet of paper and spread it on the stool, and dipping the pen in the ink handed it to Austin.

Austin took it, and dropping it on the floor deliberately put his foot on it, smashing the nib to fragments.

Stark gave a growl like a wild beast, and seizing Austin in his enormous arms lifted him high in the air, as easily as though he had been a twelve months old child.

Austin fully believed that the next moment he would be dashed down upon the rock floor of the cell and killed.

But like a flash Stark's mood changed.

"That's too quick a way o' doing things," he said, with a grating laugh. "It's your spirit I'm a-going to break, not your body. Naow I'll lay ye a dozen of them best pearls as yew write that letter afore yew're an hour older."

He dropped Austin on his feet and moved to the door.

"I'll be back right soon," he said, with ugly significance, as he left the cell.

Austin heard the key click in the lock, and dropped on the bench.

Exactly what was going to happen he could not know, but he was very certain that something particularly unpleasant was before him, and he sat quite still, drawing deep breaths, and endeavouring to steady his nerves for the coming ordeal.

He set his teeth and vowed to himself that—come what might—he would not do Stark's bidding. He knew Heritage well enough to be certain that, if he did write the letter which Stark demanded, Heritage would think no sacrifice too great to obtain his freedom. He would even give up his great ambition of purchasing the new cruiser, and so regaining his place in the service which he loved.

Stark did not leave him much time for meditation. In less than five minutes he was back, and with him two of his squat, yellow-faced, almond-eyed satellites.

"Tie him tight," said Stark to the Chinamen. "No lettee him loose, or me blow your heads off one time."

With stolid faces the fellows made Austin's wrists fast behind his back, and marched him out.

Having been blindfolded when brought in this was his first sight of the top of Batol Island. He found himself on a breezy tableland, which might have been a couple of miles in length, and nearly the same breadth.

It was as bare and desolate a spot as he had ever set eyes on. Hardly a blade of grass, and the only vegetation which clothed the bare volcanic rocks was tufts of some greenish grey

shrub, the tough leaves of which rustled harshly in the wind.

Towards the middle of the island the ground fell away steeply, making a huge cup, the centre of which was no doubt the harbour into which led the passage from the open sea. Plainly, the whole island was simply the top of some long extinct volcano, the roots of which lay deep in the surrounding ocean.

A more perfect natural stronghold could not well have been imagined. Without knowing the secret of the passage into the central lake no enemy could approach, and if a hostile ship did try to force its way in the pirates would have nothing to do but fling down explosives upon its decks from the overhanging cliff-tops.

And as for bombardment, all the navies in the world might have laid off and hurled shells from their great guns on to the summit of the barren, blasted tableland, without doing any harm to the inhabitants, for the latter all lived in the caves which honeycombed the rim of the crater. The only buildings that Austin could see were the little prison that he himself had occupied, and a sort of signal-house on the highest ground.

Austin was not given much opportunity for inspection. He was marched rapidly across the stony summit of the island, until presently he saw a crowd of men in front. There were a hundred or more, and a more unpicturesque and squalid assortment could hardly have been conceived.

Nine out of ten were Chinamen. Squat, strongly built, pig-tailed men with high cheek-bones and narrow eyes, and wearing the blue blouse which is the usual dress of the Chinese coolie, whether he be pedlar or pirate. The rest were mostly brown-skinned, vicious-looking Malays.

As he came nearer Austin saw that they were gathered upon the extreme edge of the cliff, and that some of them were busy erecting something which strongly resembled a gallows.

The boy's heart beat a little more rapidly than usual, and he drew a quick, hard breath. But his face was as composed and his eyes as steady as ever as his guard pulled him up close beside the ominous wooden erection, which he now saw was so built that the cross-beam actually overhung the verge of the tremendous precipice.

"Yew see that, sonny?" said Stark, in his harshest tones, as he pointed to the gallows.

"I see it," replied Austin, quietly.

"Yew'll feel it if yew don't obey orders. Sun Ling, you takee plisoner topside cliff."

Austin was forced forward till he stood on the extreme verge of the precipice. In the great empty spaces below sea birds whirled and screamed, and at an incredible depth beneath he saw the white-rimmed surf crawl and break on the base of the tremendous headland.

For a moment a shiver ran through him, and his heart seemed to cease beating. But only for a moment. His long experience in his father's mine and on the Cornish cliffs had given him a head like iron, and the feeling of dizziness passed.

Stark saw by his face that he was not frightened, and that the knowledge annoyed him was evident by the snarl in his voice as he spoke again.

"See here, air yew going to write that letter?"

"I thought I'd told you," said Austin, patiently.

Stark uttered a violent expression.

"You puttee lope round him, Sun Ling," he ordered, furiously.

The Chinaman obeyed stolidly.

It was at this moment that Austin, taking what he believed to be his last look at sea and sky, caught sight of the white sails of a large schooner which was coming up from the southward at a great pace.

He gave a slight gasp. Distant as she still was, he could not be mistaken. She was the *Brilliant*.

Stark, however, did not notice her. He was too much occupied with Austin.

Sun Ling adjusted the rope around Austin's neck. The other end was rove through a pulley in the cross-bar above.

"Now, see here," said Stark. "Either yew writes that letter or off yew swings. They gives yew a nine-foot drop in your own country. This'll be a little matter of nine hundred. I reckon it'll stretch your neck right enough. Now what's it to be. Speak quick."

"You waste a lot of time, Mr. Stark," said Austin, scornfully. "If you're going to hang me, get along with the job."

Stark ground his strong white teeth. He stepped forward, and Austin fully believed that he meant to fling him off into eternity.

But Stark had other intentions.

With his great hands he loosened the rope from round Austin's neck, and instead adjusted it round his waist. Then he gave his men the order to hoist, with the result that Austin was

swung off his feet, and next moment found himself dangling in mid-air, spinning like a joint on a spit over the awful depths below.

Now for the first time his head failed. His brain seemed to turn to water, and a deadly sickness seized him. But fearing above all things to betray his feelings to the ruffians behind him, he closed his eyes tightly, and after a few moments the sick sensation passed and he was his own man again.

"Enjoying yerself?" asked Stark, brutally. "View's real pretty, ain't it? Had enough yet, pardner?"

Austin did not answer at first. His eyes were on the *Brilliant*, which was coming up hand over fist, making straight for the island.

Austin's powers of sight were out of the common, and he saw that on her after-deck lay some large white object, resembling a huge dragon fly with outspread wings. Like a flash it came to him that this was Clive's aeroplane, and that, as it was ready rigged, it must be meant for immediate use. He remembered that Clive had said that this new type which his father had invented could rise with hardly any run, and could therefore be used from the deck of a ship.

So Clive intended an immediate attack. For a moment the idea staggered Austin. Then a gleam of hope shot across the black despair which enveloped him, and he determined to make a last desperate bid for life and liberty.

To do so he must pretend to give way to Stark. Such hypocrisy went strongly against the grain, but it was his only chance. Perhaps, too, it was the only chance for the success of his chum's daring plan.

Comforting himself with the old saying that "All's fair in love and war," he answered in a gasping voice:—

"Yes, I've had enough."

Stark gave a horrible chuckle.

"I reckoned that 'ud fetch him. Yank him in, Sun Ling."

Someone slackened the rope, another caught it with a boat-hook. In a minute Austin's feet were once more on firm ground.

Austin had hoped that there might be delay in obtaining pen and paper, but Stark had them ready, and without waste of time Austin's wrists were untied.

"See here, Britisher," said Stark, in his harshest tones, "yew'll write jest what I say. Else over yew goes again, and this time there ain't no coming back."

Austin nodded, and slowly and clumsily took up the pen. The *Brilliant* was still a long way off, and he was racking his brains how to make sufficient delay. He marvelled that no one seemed to have noticed her, but the whole rascally crew were so intent on the doings of their leader and his prisoner that they had no eyes for anything else.

"You must let me rub my wrists," he said. "My hands are so stiff from your beastly rope that I can't hold the pen."

"Be smart about it then," growled Stark.

Austin began deliberately to rub his right wrist with the other hand.

It was at this moment that another voice broke in. Austin knew the spitting, hissing tones even before he glanced up and saw the vicious, monkey-like face of Kwala.

"Lookee see, captain. Piecee ship coming!"

Stark started up to his full height, and following the direction of the Malay's pointing finger saw the *Brilliant* bowling along towards the island before the stiff breeze. She was making nearly twelve knots, and already the fountain of white foam flung up by her plunging bows was plainly visible.

"Great guns!" cried Stark. "Here's luck! I'm a nigger ef it ain't the *Brilliant*—and coming right in! Geewhiz, but the Britishers must hev gone plumb crazy! Here yew, Wun Lung, skip off and tell them to git the big guns ready. Chong, you go down to the harbour, and hev the schooner hove off her moorings. Say, I'll be along myself in about two twos."

In his excitement he forgot to give his orders in the usual pidgin English, but the men he addressed seemed to understand, and hurried off to obey.

"Naow, sonny," said Stark, turning to Austin. "Yew'll jest hurry up, and write that there letter. I've a kind of fancy to turn postman and deliver it myself."

Austin cast another quick glance at the *Brilliant*. She had suddenly come to at a distance of about three miles from the island, and all hands were busy getting sail off her.

A thrill of fierce excitement ran through his veins. The time was come. In another few moments the aeroplane would start on her desperate mission.

Calming himself with a strong effort, he took the pen from Stark and began to write.

Captain Stark gave the order to hoist, and Austin was swung out over the cliffs.

CHAPTER XIX

HOW THE TABLES WERE TURNED

"'DEAR Sir,'" dictated Stark, "or yew can say 'dear captain' if yew've a mind to. 'I'm enjoying a little picnic along of Captain Stark on the top of Batol Island. The captain enjoys my sassiety to that extent he don't want to part with me, and he says that, ez compensation, he'll hev to ask fer a few of them there pearls yew've been a-getting out of your lagoon.'

"Got thet?" he asked.

Austin, who had been scribbling industriously with the paper on his knee, glanced up and nodded with a queer look in his face. He took the opportunity of casting a lightning glance at the *Brilliant*. All sail was off her, but the aeroplane had not yet risen.

"'The price he sets on me is a million dollars,'" went on Stark, "'which is two hunderd and fifty thousand pound English money; and

he sez that if the cash or pearls don't come in a week he'll be that worked up he'll be apt to do something desperit, sech as chucking me over the edge of the cliff, which is a mighty high one.'

"Thet down all right?" said Stark, with an evil chuckle. "Naow yew can sign it 'yours truly,' and your name in full."

Austin finished writing, and Stark put out his great hand for the paper.

Austin let him have it, and Stark, screwing up his mahogany countenance, began to read.

As he read his expression changed first to unbelief, then to rage.

Small wonder, for Austin's letter was anything but what he had dictated.

It ran as follows:—

"DEAR CAPTAIN HERITAGE,—Stark and his gang of pirates tried to raid Sunshine Island, and got badly left. He was beaten off with loss, and though he unluckily caught me, you needn't worry about that, for I am quite safe and happy. He may try to get you to ransom me, but if he does don't pay any attention, for he dare not do anything to me——"

This was as far as Stark got.

Then he fairly choked with rage, and with a furious exclamation tore the letter into fragments, which he scattered on the ground and trampled on like a madman.

"Daren't do anything to yew? By the great Horn Spoon I'll show yew what Stark kin do when he's a mind to. Here, gim me thet knife," turning to Kwala, who stood by with a twisted grin on his monkey-like countenance.

It was at this moment that Austin heard a sound which gave him courage. It was the crackling roar of a high-powered aeroplane engine.

Quick as light he sprang between Stark and the Malay, and as the latter was in the act of drawing his kreese from his belt he snatched it from his hand, and made a lunge at the Black Flag chief, which forced him to leap back with amazing activity.

Kwala, with a shrill scream, dashed at Austin, to stagger back with three fingers of his right hand missing.

Before either of his adversaries could recover himself Austin was off inland, running as he had never run before, the kreese tight gripped in his right hand.

Not one of Stark's men attempted to touch him. In fact they paid no attention at all to him. The eyes of every mother's son among them were fixed on the great aeroplane which had now risen to a height equal to that of Batol's lofty cliffs, and was hurtling like an avenging eagle straight towards the island.

"Stop him!" roared Stark. "Catch him alive! A hundred dollars to any of yew who catches him!"

Not a man paid the slightest attention. More than half were flat on their faces on the ground, worse frightened than they had ever been in their murdering lives. Not one of them had ever before seen or even heard of an aeroplane, and their superstitious souls quaked with terror, believing the great white shape that clove the air with such fearful speed, and so terrible a sound, to be the "roc," the giant bird of Eastern fable, which picks up men and devours them as a chicken does grains of corn.

Austin's goal was the prison which he had so lately left. Once he could get inside it he believed that he could bar the door, and hold off his pursuers long enough to give Clive a chance of coming to his help.

Crack! crack! Bullets sang over his head. He glanced back over his shoulder.

Stark had pulled his great, long-barrelled navy revolver, and was firing as he ran. He was coming at a fearful pace, his long legs carrying him across the rugged ground with amazing speed and certainty.

Behind came Kwala, like a ferret on the trail of a rabbit. When the Malay's blood is up he is insensible to pain, and although he must have been losing blood fast from his wounded hand, Austin felt more fear of the vicious little brown man than of the giant Stark himself.

Ping! A bullet struck a rock a yard from Austin's side, and splashed into hissing fragments of lead.

It was still a long way to the prison building, and Austin's heart sank as he felt his strength beginning to fail. He had been so badly knocked about in the storm that he was not himself by any means.

His head was beginning to spin, there was a nasty dryness in his throat, and his legs began to feel like lead.

Stark was gaining, and a horrible fear seized Austin lest he might trip and fall, in which case he would be caught before Clive had a chance of rescuing him.

Stark had fired four times in all. Instinctively Austin knew that he was keeping his fifth cartridge until he was near enough to make certain of his aim.

Out of the sky above came the metallic roar

of the aeroplane's throbbing cylinders; but Austin dared not look back again to see how near it was.

With bursting lungs and throbbing heart he strained onwards. Behind him, closer and ever closer, he could hear the clatter of Stark's boot-soles, and the rattle of displaced pebbles as the giant sprang from rock to rock.

Another hundred yards. The prison was still more than double that distance away, and a groan burst from Austin's lips, for he realised that it was beyond his powers to reach it. He was utterly spent, and reeling as he ran.

But even in this desperate pass his presence of mind did not desert him, and, catching sight of a thick tuft of the stiff, grey-green scrub growing just to the left of his path, he suddenly doubled and hurled himself down behind it.

It was the merest desperate chance, and he knew it. Stark was almost on him, and Stark had a cartridge in his pistol. He himself had nothing but the knife.

He had just time to take three long breaths when Stark reached the spot, and, making a great spring over the clump of brush, landed within a yard of the spot where Austin was crouching.

Before Austin could regain his feet the long, blue barrel was pointing straight at his head, and Stark's thick forefinger was twitching on the trigger.

"So yew thought yew'd fool me?" grated the pirate, his cold grey eyes glaring down at the boy. "But yew got left, ez every feller does ez tries to fool Cap'n Stark. Drop thet there knife, and put your hands up!

"Sharp, now!" as Austin hesitated.

"Crash!" The explosion resembled that of a heavy gun, and was so close that, even in the hot sunlight, the flash was almost blinding, while the shock was so violent that it nearly flung them both to the ground.

A geyser of rocks and stones leaped from the stony surface close by, and fell with a series of heavy thuds around them.

"Great Cæsar!" gasped Stark, spinning round.

Austin saw his chance, and took it.

Springing to his feet, he put all his strength into the blow, and brought the blunt edge of the kreese down upon Stark's skull.

The great brute flung up his arms straight above his head, reeled a moment, then fell with a crash like that of a falling tree.

For a moment Austin stood over the body of his gigantic foe, hardly able to believe in his success. But Stark did not move.

The rattle and roar of the aeroplane engine just overhead recalled him to a sense of his surroundings.

"Look out! I'm coming down for you," came Clive's voice, high and thin.

Austin looked up. The aeroplane was circling exactly overhead. Clive, seeing that he had attracted Austin's attention, waved his hand with a forward motion, and swept onwards.

For the moment Austin was puzzled. Why did not Clive come down at once?

Then it suddenly occurred to him that the ground was too rough for the aeroplane, once down, to rise again. Clive was no doubt looking for a smooth spot on which to descend.

Up to this moment Austin had had no time to consider the situation. Now he suddenly remembered Kwala.

He looked round, but could see nothing of the Malay.

He had vanished as completely as though the earth had opened and swallowed him up.

But, knowing the implacable nature of this little fiend in human form, Austin was not any easier in his mind. He more than suspected that the brown man had dropped down into hiding behind a bush or stone, and was biding his time. Or perhaps he had gone back to the main body of Stark's bandits on the edge of the cliff to rouse them from their trance of terror, and gather them to attack the aeroplane.

All this passed through his mind like a flash, and meantime he stood where he was, keeping guard over Stark, and watching Clive circling in search of an alighting place. Presently he saw the great white-winged machine swoop earthwards, while the roar of its engine ceased with startling suddenness.

The place Clive had selected was the better part of a quarter of a mile from where Austin stood—a flat, rocky plateau not far from the prison building.

Lightly as an albatross the plane landed, and, running forward a few yards, remained still. Clive at once sprang out, and proceeded to make the machine fast. The breeze, though luckily it was falling, was still fresh, and it would have been dangerous to leave the broad wings free to be caught by any wandering gust.

Austin was now in a dilemma. He hardly knew what to do next—whether to run and join Clive, or wait for him where he was.

By joining Clive at once he himself could make certain of getting away from this night-

Springing to his feet, he brought the blunt edge of the kreese down upon Stark's skull, putting all his strength into the blow. At that moment Clive's voice rang out from the acroplane.

mare island of rocks and pirates. But, on the other hand, by doing so he was risking the great opportunity of capturing Stark, for at any minute the Black Flags might recover from their panic, and come up at a run to rescue their leader.

To capture Stark would be a triumph indeed. Once Heritage had him safe, the Black Flags would very soon go to pieces. It was Stark whom the Japanese Government wanted. Dead or alive, he was the price of the extension of the lease of Sunshine Island.

Looking down at the huge brute stretched at full length upon the black pebbles, Austin ground his teeth to think of the puzzle in which he was plunged.

An older man and one less scrupulous than Austin might have solved the difficulty in very short order by killing the scoundrel outright.

But although he knew well that death was a mild punishment to what the ruffian deserved, he could not find it in his heart to carry out the sentence in cold blood.

Yet to let the man escape was equally out of the question.

Once more he glanced at the grisly giant. His eyelids were flickering. Evidently his scattered senses were beginning to return. Like a hawk Austin swooped upon him, turned him over on his face, and, tearing off his own necktie, made the thick wrists fast behind his back.

Then with his own and Stark's handkerchiefs he tied his ankles, and finished by gagging him securely.

He was just finishing the task when Clive himself came tearing up.

"My dear old chap!" he cried, joyfully. Then, as his eyes fell upon Stark, "Jupiter! You don't mean to say you've bagged that beauty!"

His tones and face expressed such amazement that, in spite of the desperate nature of the situation, Austin laughed outright.

"It was your sky-rocket did the trick, Clive," he replied. "Made him jump just as he was going to pot me, and I took the chance and got him a wipe over the head. The question is what we're to do with him. If O'Rourke was here he'd probably chop his head off, and take that with him; but, brute as he is, I can't slay him in cold blood."

Clive shook his head.

"No, we can't do that. We must take all of him or nothing. Catch hold of him. We must carry him to the machine."

"But your plane won't carry the three of us," said Austin, quickly. "And he weighs as much as two."

"Don't worry about that. Gaudin took up four passengers in a jolly sight smaller machine than mine. If we can get him there I'll do the rest. But you look badly crocked, Austin. Are you up to carrying one end of him?"

"I'll do it or bust," said Austin between set teeth. "Hurry up, for those yellow-faced beggars may be on us any minute now, and that beauty Kwala isn't a mile away."

"Kwala! Great Scott! Then the sooner we make tracks the better."

Six months earlier Clive could hardly have lifted Stark's giant head and shoulders. But the outdoor life and the sea air, together with good food and freedom from anxiety, had filled him out, and hardened his muscles till he was almost Austin's equal in physical strength.

At present, indeed, he was very much his superior, for Austin had suffered severely during the past few days, and his hardships had told upon him.

But he took a long breath, set his teeth, seized Stark by the legs, and lifted them.

Now to carry a sixteen stone man across some four hundred yards of rough ground is no mean task for two strong men. For two boys not yet come to their full strength it requires a Herculean effort. Add to it that they had to do it at top speed, and with the knowledge that at any minute they might be a target for a volley of rifle bullets, and the job was absolutely terrifying.

Before they had covered a quarter of the distance the perspiration was pouring down their faces in streams; their clothes clung to them, saturated; they were panting for breath, and the body of the gigantic pirate felt as though it weighed a ton.

But they were full half-way before Clive, noticing how white Austin's face had gone beneath its tan, stopped, and said quickly:—

"Lay him down a minute, Austin. We've got to have a rest or we shall both crock up."

Austin dropped Stark's legs with a bump, and slipped down on the nearest rock, gasping and sobbing for breath. Black specks danced before his eyes, and he felt as if he could never face the last half of the journey.

Clive saw his friend's exhaustion, and it frightened him.

Suddenly he put his hand into his pocket.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed; "I'd clean forgotten. I've got some beaten egg in milk in a

medicine bottle. Just the thing for you. Drink it down, old chap. It'll pull you round like winking."

Austin obeyed without a word, and swallowed a good half of the thick, tepid stuff.

"Ripping!" he said. "Done me heaps of good. You finish it, Clive."

But Clive refused more than a swallow, and forced Austin to drink down the rest.

It was nearly ten minutes since Clive had dropped his bomb, and so far they had seen nothing of the rest of Stark's gang.

Now, just as they were lifting Stark again, the heavy thud of a gun shook the air.

Clive started.

"It's all right," said Austin, reassuringly. "They're potting at the schooner—that's all. Whoop her up. I'm like a two-year-old after than drink of yours."

With Stark's great carcase swinging between them they toiled onwards over the rocks and brush. Presently the ground became a trifle smoother, and Austin gave a sigh of relief as he thought that the worst of their troubles were over.

But they were still fifty yards from their goal when a hoarse shouting made itself heard, and glancing back over his shoulder he saw about half a dozen of the Malays coming at a run from the cliff edge.

They were led by a monkey-like figure which flourished a gleaming kreese and yelled shrill encouragement to his followers.

"Here they come!" he gasped. "We shall never do it."

CHAPTER XX

THE LAST CHAPTER

IT was not like Austin to give way to despair, but he was very nearly at the end of his tether, in spite of his brave words to Clive a minute earlier.

"One more spurt," cried Clive. "We'll beat 'em yet."

Ashamed of his momentary cowardice, Austin set his teeth and braced every nerve for a last effort. The two boys broke into a sort of jog, and, with hearts pounding as if they would burst, stumbled along over the baking rocks towards the aeroplane.

Each moment they expected a volley about their ears, but, for some reason or other, Kwala and his crew had no guns with them.

But they ran two feet to the others' one, and when at last Clive and Austin reached the aeroplane Kwala was only a hundred yards away.

"Sling him in here, back of the driving seat," gasped Clive. And with an effort which took their last ounce of reserve strength they lifted the giant on to the framework back of the seat.

"Now make him fast while I crank her up."

Austin's fingers flew as he feverishly knotted the rope round Stark's great body.

The Malays were almost on him.

He ground his teeth. Were they to lose everything at the last moment?

"Look out!" shouted Clive.

Austin whirled round.

Kwala's crooked blade flashed in the hot sunlight, as he aimed a furious blow at the white boy. Austin ducked, and the kreese missed his head by an inch. The point struck the metal framework of the aeroplane, and with a sharp *kling* the weapon snapped in two.

Austin snatched up his own knife, which he had dropped on the ground, and drove at Kwala, who gave back with a snarl, showing his teeth like an angry cat.

His followers, five in number, were almost up. Brandishing their wicked-looking weapons, they came on at a run.

The odds were hopeless. Austin glanced round despairingly; but there was no help in sight. On the other hand, more of the pirates, who had now got over their first spasm of superstitious terror, were streaming up from the distance, uttering savage cries.

Clive was still cranking hard. Apparently he was having difficulty in starting the engine.

Suddenly he let go the handle, and, springing into the machine, reached down under the seat.

"Look out, Austin!" he shouted. "Get behind the plane."

Austin ducked in under the wheels.

As he did so Clive straightened himself, and with all his force flung a small round object, black in colour and about the size of a cricket ball, straight at the oncoming pirates.

There was a crashing report, a blaze of flame, and stones and jagged fragments of rock flew upwards in a fountain.

The bomb had struck a rock a few feet short of the foremost of the pursuers, and they scattered with shrill cries of terror.

"Give 'em another if they come up," said Clive, as he handed a second of the deadly missiles to Austin. "I'll have another shot at starting her."

He began to turn the crank again.

Austin, bomb in hand, lips tight set, stood facing the savage crew.

None of the latter had been killed, but some were injured by flying stones. They kept back out of reach, and Kwala was shouting and signalling to the men in the background.

Austin saw the reason. Some of these had rifles.

His spirits, which had risen for the moment, dropped again. He and Clive had no firearms, and once the riflemen got within range their last chance was gone. They would be shot down where they stood.

Would the engine never start? Clive now had his head among the machinery, and was making some adjustment in the engine.

The first of the riflemen topped the rise a couple of hundred yards away. One stopped and put his carbine to his shoulder, but hesitated and dropped it again.

Austin understood. The man was afraid of hitting Stark.

Kwala yelled at him. What he said Austin could not understand, but apparently he was urging him to shoot, and take the chances.

Once more Clive was at the crank, and next moment the air was rent by the rattling, maxim-like roar of the great six-cylinder engine.

"Hurray!" cried Clive, shrilly. "Tumble in, old man! She's started!"

"You first!" answered Austin. "I'll keep 'em off till you're ready."

Clive made one leap into his driving seat, and warped the planes for rising. Austin scrambled wildly after.

Instantly Austin let in the clutch, and the great white-winged plane shot forward, its rubber-shod wheels bumping over the rough ground.

With a scream of rage Kwala rushed forward. Fury at the escape of his prey drove him mad.

The plane was in the very act of rising from the ground when Austin felt a slight jar as though it had run over something, and there pealed out a hoarse and terrible scream.

Glancing over sideways he saw a sight which made him sick. Blood-soaked fragments of what had a moment before been a man lay scattered upon the black rock. The phosphor-bronze propeller, spinning at over a thousand revolutions per minute, had caught the Malay, and shattered him like the shock of a bursting shell.

Luckily no damage was done to the propeller itself, and with an easy leap the huge plane cleared the ground, and rushed upwards at a steep angle.

Austin felt the wind whip his face, and saw the rocks and scrub of the pirate stronghold dwindle beneath him.

For a moment the strangeness of the sensation kept him silent, and involuntarily he gripped the rail beside him with both hands.

Clive noticed.

"It's all right, old man," he said, reassuringly. "Feels a bit funny at first, I know, but you're safe as houses. She's running like a clock in spite of the weight she's carrying."

Before Austin could answer there was a whiplike crack in the depths below, and looking over the side he saw a tiny jet of smoke rise.

Crack! crack! again, and with a ping and a hum two bullets passed close to the machine.

"Put it on, Clive!" said Austin, sharply. "The beggars are firing at us."

"Don't worry. They're not likely to hit us," answered Clive, but all the same he pushed a lever over, and the great plane leaped forward like a wild duck scared by a punt-man's gun.

Crash! a regular volley burst below, and the air sang with bullets. Austin heard a little click behind.

"One's got home!" he said, sharply.

"Didn't hit us, anyhow," replied Clive. "Only the machine. And unless a stay was cut a dozen bullets wouldn't hurt us."

He looked over.

"We're safe now," he said. "We're clear of the land. Look, the sea is below us."

"What are you going to do—make for the schooner?"

"Only wish I could. But that's out of the question. The platform on her deck is too small to land on without chancing an utter smash. No, we'll have to make straight for Sunshine Island. It's only fifty miles away, and we ought to do it in an hour."

"There's the schooner!" cried Austin. "See, she's signalling!"

"Wishing us luck," said Clive, with a grin. "I say, Austin it will be worth something to see the skipper's face when he realises that we've got Stark."

"By Jove! it's too good to be true," said Austin, heaving a deep sigh of relief. "Five minutes ago I never thought we'd get out of it with whole skins."

"More did I," responded Clive, as he warped the planes, and the white-winged machine rose higher and higher into the blue. "I say, you might have a squint at Stark, and see if he's alive or dead."

Austin turned round in his seat.

"He's still got his pretty eyes shut, anyhow," he said. "But, halloa, what's the matter? There's something running out behind. Great Scott, it's the petrol! That bullet's chipped the tank."

Clive gave a gasp.

"Where?" he asked.

"About half-way up."

"For any sake plug the hole if you can! We're gone coons if we haven't got enough left to take us to the island."

Austin was already at work. Rolling up a corner of his handkerchief he was stuffing it into the hole made by the bullet.

"That's stopped it for the minute; but I'll have to hold it in," he said.

He remained in a kneeling position, holding the plug in the leak while Clive sent the plane hurtling through space high above the waste of waters.

Her speed was tremendous, for, luckily, the wind was a following one. In a very few minutes the schooner was hull down, and then in a little while even her white sails vanished.

Batol's huge, gloomy bulk still remained above the horizon, but it rapidly dwindled.

The minutes dragged by, each filled with desperate anxiety. It was impossible for Austin to tell whether enough of the precious petrol remained in the pierced tank to carry them to their destination, and Clive, of course, could not for one moment take his attention from the task of steering the great machine.

He was driving her at the very top of her tremendous speed, and keeping at a height of fully two thousand feet.

Austin, as he knelt in his seat, holding his handkerchief tightly against the leak, was almost numbed with cold from the terrific rush through the air. As he looked down at the crawling wavelets in the abyss below he shuddered to think of what would happen if their fuel gave out, and they were forced to drop into the sea.

Presently he found that the handkerchief was quite dry, and knew that the petrol was now below the level of the leak. The bullet-hole was about six inches from the bottom of the tank, and it seemed hopeless to expect that there would be enough spirit left to carry them to their destination.

He turned, and his eyes roved the open spaces of sea and sky.

A cry of delight burst from him, for right in front lay a dark-green blot.

"The island, Clive!"

"I spotted it five minutes ago," said Clive, coolly. "Another twelve minutes does it, if the petrol holds out that long."

Silence fell, broken only by the never-ceasing rattle of the 100 horse-power engine.

Sunshine Island grew and took shape. They could see the white line of creamy foam upon the black reef. The air grew colder. Clive was driving higher and higher.

Ten minutes passed, and they were barely a mile from the reef when, with startling suddenness, the reports of the exhaust ceased. The engine had stopped.

"Done at the post!" said Austin, sharply.

"Not yet, old man," replied Clive, whose hands were busy with the warping levers. "Thanks be, we're nearly a mile up. It's hard if we can't glide down inside the lagoon."

Austin held his breath as the aeroplane sped onwards in a magnificent volplane.

Sea and island seemed to rise before them, but almost before he knew it the sea had vanished behind them, and they were over the lagoon.

On and on! It was like the shoot of a toboggan down a slope of Alpine ice. And then, before Austin knew it, they had crossed the lagoon, the front wheels struck the hard sand just above tide-mark, and, shooting forward a few yards, the aeroplane came to rest safe on firm ground.

"Nip and tuck!" said Clive, as he scrambled out of his driving seat. "Hulloa, hold up, old chap!"

For Austin, now that the long strain was over, had gone white as a sheet, and if Clive had not seized him would have collapsed completely.

Next moment came a joyful roar, and O'Rourke, followed by Pagan and the rest of the pearl-fishers, came charging down the beach.

* * * * * *

Some eighteen months later a party of five sat in the same private room in the same Plymouth hotel which four of them had occupied on the evening of their first meeting. They were Heritage, O'Rourke, Pagan, and the two boys.

The remains of an excellent supper were on the table, but the five had finished eating, and were all looking at the captain, who had just risen from his chair at the top of the table.

"My friends," he said, looking round affectionately at his four faithful followers, "last time we met here we drank to the future. To-night we drink to the successful past. As you all know, we have accomplished what we set out

to do. We have gathered a great fortune. Our pearls and shell have sold for over a million and a half. I have here "—producing some papers from his pocket—" cheques made out to each of you for your respective shares. But I want to say this—that money is no recompense for the devotion and pluck which you all have given proof of, and especially the two youngest here—Clive Denham and Austin Chesney."

"Hurray for the bhoys!" burst out O'Rourke, waving his glass in his big fist. "Their health, sorr, and yours."

Heritage smiled.

"It was they who, between them, captured Stark, and enabled me to hand him over to the Japanese Government, and so gain the necessary extension of my lease, and without that I could never have raised the money I required for the purpose you all know of. I may say in conclusion that I have approached the Admiralty, and that I am in hopes of having a favourable reply from them."

"Favourable reply, is it, sorr?" exclaimed the irrepressible Irishman, bounding to his feet. "Haven't ye seen the evening paper, sorr?" And he pulled a crumpled green sheet from his pocket.

Heritage started slightly.

"No, I have not seen it."

"Then, begorra, I'll rade it! Here it is:—

"'We understand that the King, with the advice of his ministers, has been pleased to approve of the amazing gift offered to the nation by Captain Heritage, R.N. This gift consists of a first-class cruiser of twelve thousand tons burden, and twenty-seven knots speed. It is the first time in history that any such gift has been made to his country by a private individual, and when we say that the cost of the new vessel complete, with guns and engines, will be over a million sterling, its magnitude may be appreciated by our readers.

"'It is rumoured that His Majesty's Government intend to mark their sense of gratitude to Captain Heritage by restoring him to the position which he lost some years ago by an unfortunate accident, which those who know him best cannot believe to have been due to any fault of his own.'"

* * * * * *

The rumour was correct, and to-day Captain Sir John Heritage, K.C.B., commands one of the newest Dreadnoughts, and Terence O'Rourke is afloat with him in his old capacity of boatswain.

Austin has not only set his father's mine to rights, but has opened out new veins of tin ore, and at the present price of that metal is in a fair way of becoming a millionaire.

Clive still lives for the conquest of the air, and his newest machine, which he calls a gyroplane, is being favourably considered by the Admiralty. It has the great advantage over all other similar machines that it can slow down to a speed of under twenty miles an hour, and is thus able to alight on the deck of a warship.

"You don't catch me having to fly fifty miles with a leaking petrol tank a second time," says Clive, who has not forgotten the lesson learnt on the day that he and Austin carried away the Tiger of Batol from his stronghold in the far Eastern seas.

THE END.

TWO NEW SERIALS COMMENCE IN NEXT MONTH'S "CAPTAIN"

"CONQUERING CLAYBURY." By Gunby Hadath

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The SUBSTITUTE

A FOOZLE STORY

By GUNBY HADATH

Illustrated by W. F. Thomas

"Grabbles, you'll have to be adopted!" said Foozle.

ADVERTISEMENTS (*remarked my friend Brown Minor*) make jolly good reading as a rule. Why, it was all through an advertisement that—but there, I'd better spin you the yarn from the beginning.

I've told you so often about Foozle that you must know how keen he is on newspapers. He's always reading them, and that's why he knows such a lot of out-of-way sort of things that most chaps never tumble to.

Well, he'd been reading one in the junior common room one Sunday afternoon, when suddenly he jumped up, looked round the room, winked at the Poet and myself, and went slowly out, the paper under his arm. We twigged that he had something for our private ears, so we hacked old Grabbles' shin—he was fast asleep by the fire—and followed him.

At the double-trees Foozle opened the newspaper, and showed us an advertisement in the Agony Column.

"What do you make of that?" he said, watching our faces while we read it.

A MANLY BRITISH BOY on applying to Messrs. Tweapnet, Tweap & Aftermath, 1,189 Old Broad Street, E.C., may hear of SOMETHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE.

"What do you make of that?" he repeated.

"H'm!" said the Poet. "It looks all right for the manly British boy."

"It does," said Foozle, quietly. "Very much all right."

"But I don't see how it helps us," grumbled Grabbles, half asleep still, and very grumpy at being disturbed. "I don't see how it helps us!"

"You never do, Grabbles," said Foozle. "But I do."

He regarded us amiably.

"For instance?" ventured the Poet.

"For instance? Well, we're manly, ain't we?"

"Rather!"

"And British?"

"Through and through," growled Grabbles, puffing out his chest.

"Very well, then. And if we apply to Messrs. Tweapnet, and all the rest of it, why shouldn't we hear of something to our advantage? Anybody got a pencil?"

The Poet produced his fountain-pen, and Foozle scribbled on an envelope.

"Now, listen. How will this do?" he said, and began to read:—

"Sirs——"

"No, no; Gentlemen," broke in the Poet. "They'd much rather be addressed as gentlemen."

"All right. Gentlemen—I have read your advertisement, and I should like——"

"No," cried Grabbles; "you must beg. In business letters they always beg. And put in something about a favour."

"And I beg," corrected Foozle, "the favour of hearing something to my advantage. I am, gentlemen, yours truly——"

"Obediently," said I.

"Yours obediently, a most manly British boy."

"Ripping!" cried the Poet. "That'll fetch 'em. But you've left something out. Where have they got to send their answer?"

Foozle thought a moment.

"Well, that's the difficulty, Poet. We don't want to give our own names, or mention St. Oliver's. We must see what the game is first. But I know—we'll tell them to reply to X. Y. Z., care of old Tutton, the bookseller's. I'll fix it up with him."

So we added that in a postscript, and as Grabbles happened to have a stamp on him we sent the letter off there and then.

It seemed obvious, when we came to think of it, that we couldn't expect a reply. Whatever the advertisement meant — and that would probably turn out *nil*—hundreds of fellows all over the country would answer it most likely, and quite evidently Tweapnet, Tweap & Aftermath couldn't write to everybody.

And ten days afterwards, when no letter had come, the Poet and I decided the whole thing was a fake.

But Foozle refused to agree with us.

"No," he persisted, "I m sure there's something in it, because the people with the string of names are solicitors."

"How do you know they are?" cried we.

"There's an old Law List in the library, and I looked them out in it," replied Foozle, who was up to every dodge of that sort. "It says, too, that they're commissioners of oaths!"

"Of what, Foozle?"

"Of oaths."

"Of oaths!" exclaimed Grabbles. "What's that mean?"

"Give it up," lisped Foozle. "But anyhow, there you are. Big pots like that wouldn't put in fake advertisements."

"No," murmured Grabbles, "perhaps they wouldn't. But it's plain as pie now what they're advertising for."

"Eh, Grabbie?"

"Of course it is. As they're solicitors, they want an office boy. They want a manly boy to fill ink-pots and lick stamps. That'll be to his advantage."

"Rot!" laughed Foozle. "I'll lay you're wrong."

And Grabbles was wrong. For a day or two later old Tutton produced a letter which explained the whole thing. It came from 1,189, Old Broad Street, right enough, and when we'd got to ourselves the Poet read it out to us:—

DEAR SIR,—*In re* Advt. Owing to the large number of replies to our advertisement, we have been unable to acknowledge earlier your esteemed favour—

"What did I tell you?" chuckled Grabbles.

Your esteemed favour of the 5th inst. We now beg to advise you that we are acting for a client who is exceedingly pleased with the tone of your application, and instructs us to request you to furnish further particulars.

Our client, we must explain, is desirous of adopting——

"Eh, what's that?" cried Foozle, betraying some excitement. "What's that, Poet?"

is desirous of adopting (repeated the Poet) a manly British lad, and feels that you may satisfy requirements. Will you accordingly, if you are agreeable to entertain such a proposal, address us by return, stating, in strict confidence (1) your age, (2) your birthplace, (3) your present circumstances, (4) your height, appearance, and disposition, (5) your athletic qualities, if any; and (6) all other details which may occur to you as pertinent? If possible, a photograph should accompany your reply.

Well, this fairly bowled us out. Foozle had been pacing up and down while the Poet read, and when it was finished he seemed afraid to look us in the face. I can tell you we were feeling properly disappointed. We just stood and gaped at one another.

"We've been had," cried the Poet, at last, throwing down the letter.

"Done brown!" grunted Grabbles. "Some old lady wanting to adopt a beastly kid! Nothing to our advantage in that!"

Foozle had recovered the letter, and was reading it quietly to himself. At Grabbles' words he looked up.

"She doesn't want a kid—she wants a manly British boy, Grabbie!"

"Well, I hope she'll get him!" growled Grabbie. "Come on. I vote we adjourn to the tuck-shop."

"Half a sec., old man, not so fast," lisped Foozle, catching him by the wrist. "I've an idea."

We pricked up our ears. Foozle's ideas generally turned out profitable.

"We've been had, as you say," he went on, while his eyes blinked as they always do when he is beginning to enjoy himself, "but we can get our own back. We must write to our friends, Tweapnet, Tweap, etcetera. We must answer by return."

"And pull their legs for them?" murmured the Poet.

"Well, perhaps," continued Foozle. "But we mustn't write on the school paper."

"No."

"Nor in our own names."

"Not much. We can easily invent one."

"We could," said Foozle. "But we won't."

"Why?" growled Grabbles.

"Because if we use a sham name we lose the whole joke of it. Can't you twig?"

"No," said Grabbles, more dense than usual.

"If we use a faked name, Grabbie, their answer will come to a fake person. We read it, and that's the end of it. Where's the joke? But if we write in the name of some chap here, Tweapnet, etcetera, will write back direct to him—and then the sport begins. See?"

"Well," said Grabbles. "Write in young Mick's then?"

Foozle smiled gently.

"Not much, Grabbie. There'd be no fun in that. We must write in some big chap's, who'll get awfully ratty when he hears from Tweapnets. *That'll* be the sport."

Then the Poet began to gurgle.

"I know—we'll use Casson's," he spluttered.

I've told you about Casson before. He was second prefect of Squaretoes' House; the unhealthy, oily beggar who was ashamed of having red hair; the brute who'd bullied little Mick. The idea of Casson being adopted was too beautiful to lose. Even Grabbles brightened up at last.

"But he's got to be described," he muttered; "and nobody would adopt Casson if you describe him. They wouldn't touch him with a pitchfork."

"Oh, we'll *describe* him all right," laughed Foozle. "Now then, let's hatch up the letter."

But it took us the greater part of prep., and most of the next day, before we got that letter to our satisfaction. First each of us drafted one, as you call it, on his own, and then we compared them, and took out the best bits. The whole thing sounded pretty hot stuff, I can tell you, when Foozle read it out at last:—

DEAR SIRS AND GENTLEMEN,—Your esteemed favour *in re* advert. reaches me with exceeding pleasure, and I hasten to respond thereto because, as the poet of Rome has observed with so much verity, *bis dat qui cito dat*——

(We put this in to let them see straight off how really well educated Casson was.)

If it will be to my advantage I shall be pleased, my dear sirs and gentlemen, to be adopted.

I am a very manly British lad, clean and quiet about the house; good tempered, and sound of wind and limb. I have had mumps, chilblains, whooping-cough, and German measles, but have enjoyed no serious illness otherwise, being, in the words of the American bard Whittier (with whose works you are no doubt conversant), of simple beauty and rustic health——

"Must keep that in," the Poet insisted. "It shows culture."

I am, my dear sirs and gentlemen, seventeen summers of age, and first saw the light in Essex near the birthplace of the immortal Richard Turpin and John Cade. I am tall, gracefully built, of winning manners and address. Some chaps might say this was bragging, but I've got to answer your questions——

"That last sentence doesn't seem so dignified somehow as all the rest," protested Foozle.

I haven't got a photograph, and I can't think of anything more to say, except that I shall be jolly glad to hear from you and be adopted. So please write soon.

P.S.—At present I am in the care of a certain Mr. Redwing, a gentleman of a cold and austere character, who frequently, as you will regret to learn, employs the cane. *Cave cánem*—as Homer has remarked.

"That's all right," exclaimed the Poet, when Foozle had finished. "But we must add a touch of pathos."

"A touch of what?" growled Grabbles.

"A touch of pathos, goat! To fetch 'em."

So we ended up like this:—

I am very wretched, and unless you adopt me I think I shall not last long. I am, dear sirs and gentlemen—Your grateful

AUGUSTUS G. CASSON.

P.S.—Please write soon.

Now, we wanted the reply to reach Casson all right, but naturally we weren't keen for the solicitors to twig that a boy from school was writing them, so the difficulty was where to date it from. Tutton's wouldn't do this time; we should give ourselves away if we passed a letter on to Casson's from the bookseller's.

"Yet we've got to risk something," decided

Foozle, as Grabbles was finishing a nice copy on plain paper. "Just you write St. Oliver's at the top, Grabbie. Ten to one they'll never guess it's from the school."

"Oh, no; they'll think it's from a townee right enough," said the Poet.

"I'd give a good deal to see Casson's face—when he gets their answer!" chuckled Grabbles.

Well, we posted this letter on the Wednesday from the General Post Office in the town, and then sat tight, waiting for the fur to fly. But nothing happened. Days and days passed without any sign from Casson that anything had upset him. Of course, we took jolly good care to run across him as often as we could, and one or other of us dropped constantly into his study on some excuse or other, but never a trace could we discover of a letter from Messrs. Tweapnet. Our joke had fallen flat.

And then—things did happen.

It was a Saturday afternoon ten days later, and we four had got an *exeat* into town directly after dinner to buy a birthday card for Grabbles' aunt. (That made the old lady's third birthday that term, by the way.) Passing the corner by the bridge we looked in on old Tutton. He seemed awfully glad to see us.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Talkington," he chirped. "Good afternoon, Mr. Grabbles. Any more little—er—works on voice production required?"

Grabbles scowled, but Foozle came to the rescue.

"Not to-day, thanks, Tutton," he said, airily. "But I suppose you haven't got a letter for us—for X. Y. Z., you know?"

The bookseller dived beneath his counter.

"Why, bless me, of course I have!" he cried. "It came last Thursday. Here it is, Mr. Talkington!"

This was rather startling, as, of course, we were not expecting the solicitor men to write there any more. They ought to have written direct to Casson. Foozle opened it, glanced through it, whistled, and led the way at full speed down the High Street, till we pulled up in a quiet corner of the Public Gardens.

"Now, my beauties," he began, when he had recovered his breath, "what's to do about this? Listen:—

DEAR SIR,—*Re* advt. We are in receipt of your esteemed communication, but as the address thereon is somewhat ambiguous we are forwarding this to you under the initials and to the address which you furnished in your previous favour.

We may state that our client has been favourably impressed with the tone of your application.

He agrees with us, however, in assuming that as you date from St. Oliver's you may be writing *not* from the town, but the well-known *school* of that name.

In order, therefore, to obviate any possible misapprehension on this point, he will give himself the pleasure of coming down to see you on the afternoon of Saturday next the 30th inst., by the train which arrives at 3.5 p.m.

If you are a student at St. Oliver's, our client will understand hat you cannot meet him at the station, and in that case he will proceed direct to the school.

Our client will then call upon your house master. Subject to the character given to you by that gentleman, our client may be prepared—following an interview with yourself—to make the necessary arrangements for your immediate adoption.

Our client, we must add, is Lieut.-Colonel Smith, C.M.G., M.V.O., formerly of the Bengal Light Dragoons. We are, yours truly,

TWEAPNET, TWEAP & AFTERMATH.

To Augustus G. Casson.

"Ripping!" cried the Poet. "Then it's not an old lady, after all! What a joke!"

But Foozle didn't seem amused.

"Pull yourself together, Poet," he said, quietly. "This looks serious. You see, it's addressed to Casson; quite plainly to Casson."

"Well!" puffed Grabbles, still panting from our sprint.

"Well, you goat! What'll happen? The old colonel johnny won't find any Casson at the sta——"

But the Poet interrupted him.

"My aunt!" he cried. "It's this very afternoon he's coming. Great Scotland Yard!"

"Yes," remarked Foozle, taking out his watch, "of course it is. Thirty minutes more, and he'll be here. And what'll follow?"

We regarded each other blankly. The joke was looking a little awkward.

"He'll find no Casson; he'll bolt straight up to school!" exclaimed the Poet, at last.

"And then?" lisped Foozle.

"He'll call on Squaretoes."

"And then?"

Grabbles was looking pale already

"And then the fat *will* be in the fire," he gasped.

"Very much in the fire," said Foozle, earnestly. "Squaretoes will spot us as the culprits in two ticks. He's sure to tax us with it straight away."

"It's forgery!" groaned Grabbles.

"Something very like it," replied Foozle, turning his face away rather suddenly. "Something very like forgery, Grabbie; because we signed Casson's name. No—the colonel must never reach the school!"

"But how can we stop him?" said the Poet.

"This all comes of the ass not being an old

lady," growled Grabbles. "We must waylay him at the gates, and apologise, and send him back."

"I'd like to see you trying it, Grabbie," drawled Foozle, with a sly glance at the Poet. I caught the look, and guessed that he'd some scheme in his head. "You'd make it a hundred times worse that way, Grabbie. We'd be all expelled for a cert."

"Well," panted Grabbles, "think of something. Think of something, can't you?"

"I have done," said Foozle, rather slowly.

Grabbles' face brightened.

"Yes," continued Foozle. "Yes, Grabbie. There's only one way out."

"What's that?"

"You've got to be adopted!"

I thought Grabbles was going to have a fit—he went purple.

"Eh?" he shrieked. "Eh?"

"You've got to be adopted, Grabbie."

"I'm hanged if I will!" Grabbles was fuming. "I'm hanged if I'll be adopted!"

"Can't help it—you must be," lisped Foozle.

Then the Poet took up the running.

"Dash it all, Grabbie, old chap," he cried, "you might as well trust Foozle. Young Brown and I do!"

"Then jolly well go and be adopted yourselves," groused Grabbles. "You always jam things on to me!"

"It's no good quarrelling," sighed Foozle. "It's adoption or expulsion, Grabbie."

Grabbles went purple again.

"Well, I'd rather be expelled," he spluttered, "than be adopted by a heavy Bengal colonel—much rather."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't, Grabbie. Besides, you don't understand. My idea is this: You go to the station as a townee—a townee called Casson——"

"*Do* I?"

"You meet the colonel, agree to all he says, and talk to him very nicely. He'll go back to town jolly pleased with himself and you——"

"Oh, *will* he?"

"Of course he will. Then when he's gone you'll write and say you've changed your mind, and don't want to be adopted after all. That'll finish it——"

"You're sure?" said Grabbles, ominously. "You're quite sure, Foozle?"

"Dead certain. There's the end of it."

"Oh," growled Grabbles. "Is there? Well, I'm not having any. I tell you flat!" He turned away in a huff.

The Poet went after him and brought him back.

"But I say, Grabbie, old chap," he pleaded, "you're beastly selfish. You might think a bit of us other chaps."

"Then *you* go and be adopted," persisted Grabbles. "I'd rather be expelled, I tell you."

"We'd go like a shot, Grabbie; we would, really," urged the Poet; "but we can't pretend to be Casson half as well as you can, Grabbie, old man."

"Rot!" growled Grabbles.

"We can't, truly, Grabbles. Can we, Foozle?"

"Not much," sighed Foozle, in sad, pained tones. "Still, of course"—with a shrug of resignation—"if old Grabbie won't——"

"But he will. I know you will, Grabbie; you'd play Casson splendidly, old boy."

Grabbles had always fancied his acting, you recollect. Very slowly his face brightened.

"Remember," continued the Poet, pressing his advantage, "remember, old man, how magnificent you were in the Septimus Pepstone part last Christmas. Immense! Wasn't he, Foozle?"

"Marvellous!" sighed Foozle. "Marvellous!"

"And you're only asked to be Casson for a few minutes," concluded the Poet. "To save us all from being expelled, old man."

Grabbles hesitated—and was lost.

"All right," he said, slowly, "I'll do it this time. But on two conditions, mind?"

"Yes, Grabbie?"

"On Fridays you'll all give me your helps of dollop."

I saw the Poet wince. Friday's pudding is the best pudding of the week; it would be a bit rough parting to Grabbles every Friday.

"Yes," we murmured, faintly.

"And you come to the station to back me up."

"Right-o!" cried Foozle. "Come along! Ten minutes yet before the train's due."

On our way Foozle darted into a clothier's and bought four plain cloth caps. We left our school caps with the shopman, to be called for.

"You see," he explained, as we turned into the station yard, "Colonel What's-his-name mustn't guess that we're St. Oliver's men. If he does, he may still insist on going up to Squaretoes—to get Grabbie's character. You follow, Grabbie?"

"Sort of," murmured Grabbles, whose courage looked like oozing.

"So you're Casson, Grabbie; a chap who

lives in the town here in care of a Mr. Redwing."

"That's true enough," laughed the Poet. He was threatening to have another of his beastly fits of gurgling.

"We mentioned Redwing's name in the letter, so we must stick to that," continued Foozle. "We're just three friends of yours, who've come to see you through."

"To give him a good character," suggested the Poet.

"Splendid!" cried Foozle. "That's it. You've brought us to speak to your moral worth, Grabbie. And don't forget—you're very wretched, old man. Look miserable."

Grabbles dropped his lower jaw, and bent his knees in.

"How's that?" he asked.

"Ripping!" cried Foozle. "Now pine, old man. Look wistful about the eyes. That's better. *Cave!* Here's the train. Shove yourself well forward, Grabbie!"

From our modest retirement in the background we three watched the train come in. Foozle nudged me, and pointed to a face poking out of the window of a first-class carriage. It was a fierce, very red face, with a military waxed moustache.

"There he is—for a ducat!" whispered Foozle.

Colonel Smith alighted, and glared about him. Then his eye fell on Grabbles, and I fancy his face fell. But he smiled, and wrung Grabbles' hand. He didn't want, I guess, to hurt his feelings.

"Casson—Augustus G. Casson?" he inquired.

"Yes, colonel, please, colonel," stammered Grabbles. "I hope you're very well, sir?"

With his hand on Grabbles' shoulder the colonel led the way into the waiting room. We followed at a discreet distance.

"We can talk quietly in here," we heard him beginning. "Now first—why, bless my bones! What's that?"

We didn't want to lose the conversation, and *that* was the Poet's face, peeping round the door. Caught in the act, there was nothing for us but to go right in.

Grabbles eyed us sheepishly.

"These are three friends of mine, please, sir," he explained. "Come to speak for me, sir. I'm very wretched, sir."

"You don't look it!" snapped the colonel. "You've enough flesh on you!"

Grabbles grinned, then pulled his face down quickly.

"But I'm manly, and I'm British, sir," he murmured.

"Ah—no doubt, no doubt," assented the old warrior. "Now, my lad"—with an eagle eye on Foozle—"what do you know of Casson here? Out with it."

Foozle spoke up manfully.

"He's a very nice boy, Colonel Smith," he lisped in his most winning manner. "I can recommend him for adoption thoroughly. He's very obedient and industrious and athletic and amiable; unselfish—awfully unselfish——"

"Halt!" cried the colonel, with rather a jolly laugh. "You're sure to say he's perfect. I suppose you wouldn't like to be adopted yourself, my boy, eh?"

His tones were eager.

"Me, sir? Oh, thank you very much; but I'm afraid I can't," said Foozle, politely.

The old gentleman sighed.

"Pity," he murmured; "pity. Here, Casson, come to the light," and he dragged Grabbles to the window.

Then he looked old Grabbie up and down, felt his pulse, felt his knees, thumped him on the chest, looked at his teeth; in short, examined him as thoroughly as a purchaser inspects a horse. Finally he took him by the shoulders, and held him squarely in front of him.

"Yes, I'll adopt you, my boy," he said decisively; "I'll adopt you. You're fat; but I can lick you into shape!"

Grabbles opened his mouth, and I believe he was going to cry off, but Foozle caught his eye over the colonel's shoulder. So he just growled, "Thank you, sir!" deciding to leave it to Foozle to get his captor safely away.

But we didn't know the old fire-eater. His next move quite flabbergasted us.

With a nod to us, and a short "Good day," he gripped Grabbles firmly by the arm, and marched him away towards the up platform. Of course we tooled off behind them, wondering what came next. He couldn't—no—he couldn't intend to take old Grabbie there and then!

"Please, sir, where are we going?" ventured Grabbles, timidly.

"Going? To London, my lad! There's a train up in ten minutes. Quick march!"

"But I haven't got a ticket, sir," murmured Grabbles, with a quick glance at the "Way Out."

"Tut-tut! That's soon remedied." The colonel tossed half a sovereign to a porter. "Here, my man, skip round to the ticket office, and buy a first single to Cannon Street."

"But, sir," protested Grabbles, "hadn't I better go and fetch my clothes and things?"

"Lots of clothes in London!" snapped the colonel. "Heaps of clothes!"

This was simply terrible. Imagine our feelings. There went poor old Grabbles in custody; being adopted under our noses! And all our doing!

The Poet progged Foozle forward, and he ran round in front of the colonel and his prisoner.

"Excuse me, colonel," he lisped. "But how about the legal formalities?"

Like most people, the old gentleman seemed rather smitten with Foozle.

"Legal formalities—legal fiddlesticks, my lad!" he laughed. "Tweapnet's 'll fix those."

"But isn't it rather—er—sudden?" insisted Foozle, with a gentle smile.

"If a thing's worth doing at all, it's worth doing at once; that's my motto, young man!" replied the old warrior, as we all turned on to the up platform. "*Bis dat*—what was it you said in your letter, Casson, eh?"

Of course, Grabbles had forgotten the quotation.

"Train travelling in the afternoons always makes me ill," he whined.

"Soon mend that!" snapped Colonel Smith, raising his heavy stick, significantly. "Soon mend that, Augustus."

Foozle returned to the charge.

"Besides, sir, Mr. Redwing might——"

The colonel snorted.

"Redwing? Ah, yes; the old rascal the poor boy lives with—you mentioned him, Augustus. Hang Redwing! Tweaps'll buy him off."

"Please, sir, if I came up to-morrow—after a good night's rest," Grabbles began once more, wriggling uneasily.

Then the colonel lost his temper.

"No, sir!" he thundered. "You come now, sir. Ah, thank you, porter," as the man returned with the ticket. "London train due?"

"In five minutes, sir. First-classes'll be at the far end, sir!"

We moved sorrowfully forward, all hope abandoned. Then suddenly as we neared the further end the Poet glanced over his shoulder, gurgled, clutched Foozle by the sleeve, and pointed down the platform.

To our horror we beheld old Squaretoes (Mr. Redwing, you know) sauntering slowly towards us.

For a moment Foozle hesitated; he was debating something. Then he winked at us, and went up excitedly to Colonel Smith.

"*Cave*, sir," he whispered. "Here's Redwing, Casson's guardian! He'll spot you!"

"Where?" exclaimed the colonel.

"Coming down the platform, sir."

The old fire-eater bridled up, his moustaches bristled.

"Let him come!" he roared. "I've got Augustus—and I'll keep him!"

At this very second Mr. Redwing caught sight of us.

When you think of it, the situation was astonishing. We were wearing plain caps, remember; and that, with the fact that we had been able to turn up at the station, had dispelled the colonel's suspicion that we were associated with the school. Us he regarded as four townees. In Squaretoes, bearing down with patent annoyance and bewilderment, the colonel saw nobody but Casson's unkind guardian. Foozle's warning had clinched that impression.

Mr. Redwing, on his part, only saw four men of his house who were out of bounds (for the station is out of bounds, unless you've leave to meet your people), one of them in the very obvious custody of a stranger of military bearing and truculent aspect.

You'll agree that Foozle had been quick to spot the materials of a very pretty comedy—and to play up to them.

No sooner did Grabbles behold Squaretoes than he shivered in a top-hole funk. The colonel attributed his fright to his terror of his guardian.

Up came Mr. Redwing. Foozle stood his ground, though the Poet and I might possibly have run if running could have helped us. But we knew that the old man had spotted us—and in for a penny in for a pound.

The colonel never gave old Square a chance to begin.

"Be off, sir!" he roared, raising his big stick. "Be off with you!"

I suppose Squaretoes fancied he was dotty. Anyhow, he said nothing, but made a snatch at Grabbles. The colonel was too quick for him, and thrust him back.

"I've no idea who you are, sir," said old Square, very stiffly, "but it may occur to you that your behaviour is—er—eccentric. What are you doing—with that boy of mine?"

"You're Redwing?" snorted the colonel.

"I am, sir," replied Squaretoes.

"Then I take leave to tell you you're a scoundrel, sir!" cried the old warrior, as his temper rose.

"Ah," murmured Squaretoes, fixing him

with his cold grey eye. "You must have lost your senses, my good fellow."

His "good fellow" produced two cards.

"That is my name, sir!" he bellowed, and flung one into Squaretoes' face. "That is my name, sir; and I'll trouble you to treat it with respect. And that"—as he threw the second after it—"is the name of my solicitors in London, sir. And let me tell you, sir, that they will accept the service, sir, of any proceedings you may be pleased to institute. Tut-tut! Begone with you!"

Squaretoes picked up the cards, and studied them in his most precise fashion.

"Indeed!" he remarked, icily. "Indeed, how very interesting! But it will require stronger—er—circumstantial evidence than these"—tossing the cards away from him—"to satisfy me that you are a gentleman, Colonel—er—Smith. In short, I regard you, Colonel—er Smith, as a disgrace to the uniform you wore. Come, boys!"

He moved, and waited to see if Grabbles would follow. But Grabbles was gripped too tight; he could only wriggle uneasily, with a pathetic glance at Foozle.

So, while the Poet gurgled behind him, old Square began again —

"If this be intended for a jest, Colonel Smith, permit me to inform you that it is in exceedingly bad taste. In atrocious taste, I say."

Grabbles was gripped so tightly by the infuriated colonel that he could not obey the bidding of his house master, and Foozle and his friends waited developments.

"I'd give you cells, sir, if I had you in my regiment, sir!" roared the colonel.

"Will you release that boy?"

"No, sir! I will not, sir! Go to Jericho, sir!"

"You refuse?"

"I refuse, sir!"

"Then I must summon assistance," and Mr. Redwing glanced quickly round him.

In their mutual excitement neither had noticed the bustle on the platform, and now, even as Squaretoes spoke, the express for

London came clanking to a standstill beside them, while a horde of porters, sprung from nowhere, began to slam the doors, and scream out, "Take your seats for London!"

The colonel seized his opportunity, like the old campaigner that he was. In an instant he had seized poor Grabbles, and shoved him bodily into an empty carriage. Springing in behind him, he was about to pull the door to, when Squaretoes made a leap, and gained the footboard.

"Take your seats there! Take your seats! Any more for London?" yelled the porters. "First stop London Bridge!"

With the door swinging on its hinges, and the guard's whistle at his lips, it would have been too dangerous for the colonel to thrust old Squaretoes down. We saw him hauled inside—to safety.

The whistle was blowing, the door was closing, when in sprang Foozle after them. Well, what were the Poet and I to do?

We couldn't desert the others. Somebody cried to us to stand back; the train began to move; but Foozle leaned out, and—with porters shoving us behind, and the station-master abusing us from the platform—we scrambled in as well. Phew! It was a close shave, I can tell you.

But, anyhow, there we were, all six of us, in the train—and the next stop London Bridge.

There was nothing for it, of course, but to make a clean breast. So Foozle did that, and he showed what an extraordinary series of bad luck had dogged us from the beginning. All along, as he explained, we'd only acted for the best. No chap can foresee accidents.

Squaretoes couldn't speak—he was too angry. That gave Foozle a clear field, and he went on placidly, not turning a hair. I think I've never seen him more immense. His last touch was a masterpiece—and so jolly true.

"So really, you see, sir," he concluded, very gently, "we are scarcely to blame at all. It is all the fault of Colonel Smith's solicitors."

"Of whom, sir?" roared the colonel, his face growing redder and redder.

"Of your solicitors, sir."

"Why—why, you rascal!"

"Why, sir? Because they sent their reply to our letter to X. Y. Z., at Tutton's, instead of direct to Casson, as they were instructed. Their disobedience——"

"Are you going to the Bar, young man?" broke in the colonel.

With remarkable presence of mind Foozle plunged into a discussion on the Bar as a profession. But you can't draw a red herring across Squaretoes' trail. He leaped up, apologised stiffly to the old colonel, and turned to rend us.

We should all be expelled, he declared. He had endured us long enough. This last exploit was an outrage—"an outrage, I say, boys"—and St. Oliver's must be quit of us.

"And as for you, Grabbles," he continued, "as for you, you wretched boy, I never realised before that you were quite so dense as you appear. You have shamefully——"

Then he broke off short. For Grabbles was fast asleep in his corner of the carriage. He had just begun to snore.

I thought Squaretoes was going to strike him. But an extraordinary thing happened. The old colonel, whose face, I say, had been getting redder, and redder, and redder, was taken that instant with a tremendous fit of puffing, and blowing, and exploding. Squaretoes thought he had a fit, and bent to unbutton his collar.

"Leave me alone!" panted the colonel. "I'm only laughing. By the memory of my regiment, I'd rather lose my pension than have missed it! Better than a play—by George!"

Then, like a real Briton, he begged for us; vowed himself the only one to blame, almost went on his knees for us to old Square. And at last (for Square's not a bad sort really, as you know) the expulsion threat was withdrawn just as the train steamed into London Bridge.

There was no train back at once, so what did the colonel do but make us go West to dine with him. "Jolly hungry job, adopting!" he snapped, while Squaretoes was expostulating, and carried us off to Bruton Street in a taxi. There he did us top-hole.

After dinner, behind a big cigar, Squaretoes thawed a bit, and by the time the colonel's car took us off to catch the nine o'clock back, he was almost genial. And I caught him more than once, as we went down in the train, regarding Foozle with something like a twinkle.

So far as his share was concerned, then, that advertisement ended in sundry stripes for us, and a gating. But now I come to the funny part.

For it didn't end there in other ways; in fact it hasn't ended yet. On the contrary, it turned up trumps, and Grabbles *has* heard of something to his advantage. Rum, isn't it?

It was on the following Tuesday that Grabbles got this letter:—

DEAR GRABBLES,—My doctor tells me that blue pills are capital things to take when you're recovering from a bad attack of adoption—and its

after-effects. These, I understand, prove really painful.

You and your friends will be recovering now, so I enclose a blue pill, and hope it will agree with you.

Chin-chins to the innocent who's going to the Bar (by George! he must, if I send him there myself). And in your own words, you young dog, *cave canem*.

Mind you and your chums look me up whenever you are in town. I'll find you beds, and we can do a few theatres and footer matches. Don't forget! Yours sincerely,

HANNIBAL SMITH.

As Grabbles opened the envelope, the colonel's "blue pill" dropped out. It was a postal order for a sovereign! Yes, it *did* agree with us.

But that wasn't all. Soon after, what should arrive but two air-rifles, a bike, and the latest model in biplanes. A regular shipping order!

We wrote four topping letters of thanks. And a week or two later down comes another "blue pill" (only this time the colonel called it a sleeping-draught) and an awfully jolly invitation for us four to go and spend next Easter holidays at Bruton Street. If we refused, he wrote, he'd come down and "adopt" us right away. "By George, he would!"

Are we going?

You bet we are. It isn't often you strike a ripper like the colonel!

Are we going? *We are!*

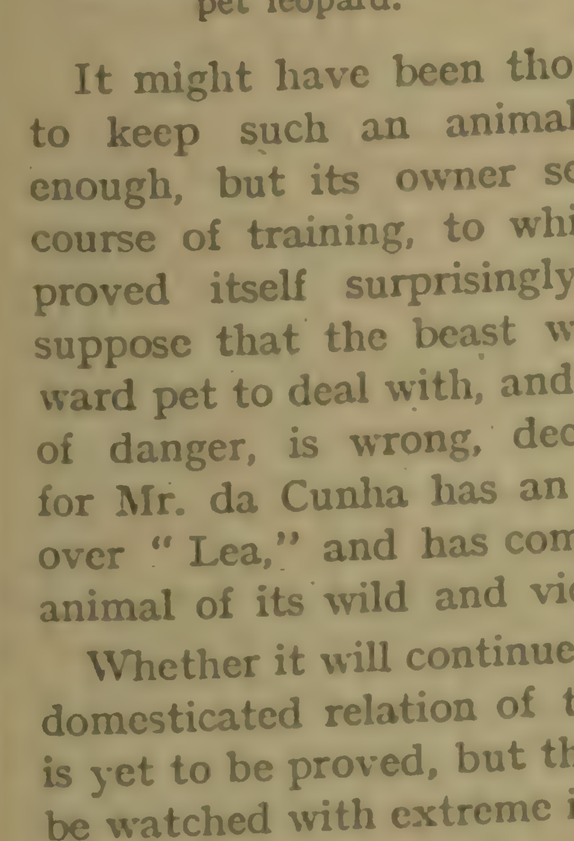
From that advertisement we did hear—"something to our advantage!"

THE END.

A Leopard as Pet

A SPICE of adventure or danger gives a zest to all our pursuits; and even in the most homely of pastimes this element is sought after with surprising frequency. Accounts of dangerous pets have been fairly common in recent years, and the latest that reaches us comes from a reader of THE CAPTAIN in Zanzibar, Mr. J. A. N. da Cunha, who has made a pet of an East African leopard.

The animal is a fine specimen of its kind; it is two and a half years old, and its length from the nose to the end of the tail is 5ft. 7ins., the tail measuring 2ft. 1in. Its height to the shoulder is 17ins., and it weighs 50lbs. It rejoices in the scientific name of *Felis pardus nanopardus*.



A Zanzibar reader and his pet leopard.

It might have been thought that merely to keep such an animal was distinction enough, but its owner set about a rigid course of training, to which the huge cat proved itself surprisingly amenable. To suppose that the beast would be an awkward pet to deal with, and a constant source of danger, is wrong, declares the owner, for Mr. da Cunha has an absolute mastery over "Lea," and has completely cured the animal of its wild and vicious propensities.

Whether it will continue to behave like its domesticated relation of the English hearth is yet to be proved, but the experiment will be watched with extreme interest.

"Lea" and her attendant, Alawe bin Sahed.

HOW TO EMBELLISH YOUR STAMP ALBUM

STAMPS, naturally, must always form the principal contents of a philatelist's album or albums; but they need not—in fact, they should not—constitute the only contents.

A collector who is enthusiastic about his hobby will soon get past the mere collecting stage, and will then feel that there are other things to do besides mounting each specimen in its allotted space. In fact, the allotted space itself will become distasteful to the collector, and he will probably decide to join the growing army of those who prefer the greater freedom of the blank album. For it is only in the blank album that one's personal predilections can be indulged. I think readers of THE CAPTAIN will welcome a few hints as to how an embellished stamp album, as I will call it for want of a better term, can be made to tell the story of the specimens it contains.

Annotations: Stamped or Written?

The first and most necessary of album embellishments are the indications of watermark and perforation varieties. Certain of the stamp-dealing firms supply special sets of small rubber stamps for this work, embracing many of the best-known watermarks and the most usual gauges of perforation. But no reasonable outfit of rubber stamps would nowadays supply all that one wanted in this department; for the many different combinations of perfs., and the ever growing list of watermark varieties, added to the variations of paper, printing, colour, etc., needing to be indicated, would mean the making of almost as many different rubber stamps as the specimens in one's collection! For this reason I advise neat pen-and-ink annotations in the album as a better plan than a mixture of rubber stamps and handwriting. A "mapping" pen should be used for this work, and if it be neatly done the result will enhance rather than detract from the beauty of the album pages. Here is an opportunity for a display of fine penmanship, which, judging from some of the remarkably well-written letters I receive, will be welcomed by philatelic Captainites.

Indicating Errors, Varieties, and Curios

Not only should the philatelic "points" of each specimen or group of specimens be indicated in this way, but also any peculiarity, whether it constitutes a minor variety or an "error," or merely a curio which the collector has deemed of sufficient interest to merit a place in his album, should be briefly but adequately described. By this means a stamp album is made something more than a mere storehouse for one's philatelic treasures; it becomes an interesting and self-explanatory exhibition, which is not only of value to its owner, but can also be inspected with pleasure and with understanding by friends and relatives whether they have any personal knowledge of philately or not.

Having annotated his collection in this manner—and it will run away with a great deal of his time if it is to be fully and neatly done—the philatelist will next have to consider whether he shall go further and embellish his album with objects and exhibits, other than postage stamps, bearing upon the genesis of the various issues and the history of postage stamps and the postal service generally. All who have seen a first-class collection so embellished will, I think, come to an affirmative decision if their time and opportunities will permit of it.

Essays, Proofs, Reprints, Forgeries, etc.

The first and most natural objects to include in one's collection are the many various labels which, while not being veritable postage stamps, have all the semblance of stamps issued for the postal service. I refer here to Essays (that is, proofs or trial printings of rejected stamp designs), Proofs (trial printings of stamp designs approved and eventually

issued), Reprints (including "Government counterfeits"), and last, but not least, Forgeries and Bogus Stamps.

It is not only interesting, but also distinctly instructive, to have specimens of these various unauthorised and unissued stamps in one's collection.

Particularly valuable for purposes of comparison are the reprints and forgeries, and, provided that their real character be very clearly indicated, no ill consequence can result from their inclusion in the album. I have often thought that the finest means of educating a novice in stamp collecting would be to give him a collection of forgeries to study, for in that way he would learn not what he had to collect, but what he had to avoid—which is infinitely more important. In connection with the Society of Stamp Collectors, following the lead of older-established societies, we are now forming a Forgery Collection, which I hope it will be possible at a later date to pass from member to member throughout the country, and thus give young collectors a far more practical lesson in the avoidance of faked and forged stamps than they could possibly derive from catalogues or handbooks.

An "Extra-Illustrated" Collection

One of our most distinguished philatelists, the Earl of Crawford, President of the Royal Philatelic Society, goes much farther than this in embellishing and amplifying his collections, for he includes in them everything having an important bearing upon postage stamps and their emission. He will present, wherever possible, first, a copy of the official decree authorising the issue, then artist's and engraver's proofs, colour trials, etc., then a rich array of the actual stamps used and unused, with all minor varieties, and with specimens used on envelopes to show varieties of postmark, etc., the whole followed by reprints, forgeries, etc., if any such exist.

In fact, Lord Crawford applies the art of the "grangeriser" or "extra illustrator" to stamp collecting, and the result is not a mere accumulation of stamps, but a panorama of postal history.

Of course, it is only a man of wealth and leisure who can collect on these magnificent lines, and I am far from suggesting that such a scheme can be followed by Captainites. At the same time, there are many ways in which even a young collector of very restricted means can greatly enhance the value and the instructiveness of his collection. Copies of Government decrees determining the values, designs, etc., of postage stamps, or of notices modifying the rates of postage—these and similar items, whether they are originals or merely clippings from papers, are often of the greatest value as a running commentary on a stamp collection proper. Portraits of sovereigns, presidents, and other personages portrayed on postage stamps are given a place in their albums by many collectors. Others include post-card views of buildings, statues, and places illustrated on commemorative issues; and, in fact, there is no limit to the means by which one may "extra-illustrate" a collection with results both decorative and instructive.

COLLECTORS IN COUNCIL

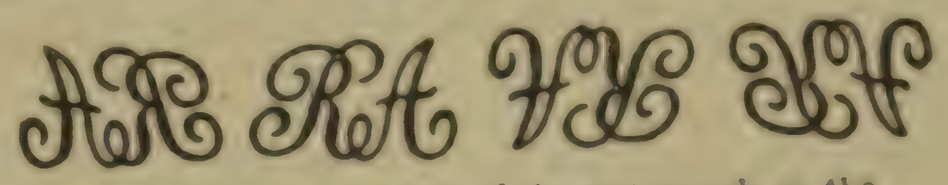
WATERMARKS: "INVERTED" AND "REVERSED"

"One sees in the catalogues the expression, 'watermark inverted,' and also occasionally 'watermark reversed.' Are not these terms synonymous?"—*N. W. E., Launceston.*

By no means. An inverted, or "upside-down," watermark is caused by printing stamps on paper which has been fed into the press wrong-end foremost, whereas a reversed or "wrong-way-round" watermark is caused by the paper being placed on the press wrong-side uppermost. As this matter is a source of perennial perplexity to young collectors, let us take a sample watermark and illustrate the various positions in which it may be found. A useful example for this purpose will be the Argentine Republic's "R.A." ("Republica Argentina") watermark as used for the "Rivadavia" stamps of 1864-67.

Here are given four different positions of the "R.A." watermark as viewed from the gummed side of the stamps.

Fig. 1 is the normal watermark, although naturally we see it the wrong way round on the back of the stamp; Fig. 2 is the reversed form, though viewing it from the gummed



Four different positions of the watermark on the Argentine stamps of 1864.

side makes it look quite in order; Fig. 3 is the normal watermark inverted; and Fig. 4 is the watermark both inverted and reversed. Watermarks are also occasionally "set sideways," there being several instances of this in the stamps of the British Colonies.

WHAT THE CORNER LETTERS MEAN

"Is it usual for collectors to place in their albums many specimens of English penny red stamps (Queen Victoria) which are all exactly alike except for different letters in the four corners?"—*A. B., Chester, and others.*

It depends on the size and scope of the collection. An advanced collector or "specialist" of British stamps will certainly collect the

different corner letterings of the old red penny stamps, because these show him the position originally occupied by each stamp in the complete sheet of 240 specimens, and it is a favourite practice to reconstruct a sheet by getting a specimen of each variety of corner lettering from AA down to TL in its correct position.

But if A. B. will just look at his specimens a little closer he will probably find that there are other differences apart from variations in the corner lettering. Within the network at the right and left sides of each stamp he will find very tiny numerals representing the stamp's "plate number." There were 225 plates of the old "penny red" in all, though not all of them were printed from. Prior to plate 70 the plate number was not indicated on the stamps at all. These varieties, again, are collected eagerly by the advanced philatelist, whereas the general one-of-each sort collector would not have the time or the space in his album for either plate numbers or corner letterings.

THE RARE OLD "PACIFIC STEAMS"

"Can you tell me how to distinguish between forged and genuine stamps of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, as I am afraid my specimens are counterfeits?"—*H. V., Westcliff.*

It is more than likely that your fears are well founded, "H. V.," for there are more forgeries in circulation than genuine copies; but it is almost impossible to give any definite test by which they may be detected. The Rev. R. B. Earée, the author of "Album Weeds," the greatest work on forged stamps, fills over six pages of his book with descriptions of these forgeries. "I really believe," he writes, "that the forgeries of these stamps are more abundant than any other counterfeit described in this book; I never, by any chance, get an ordinary collection for examination which does not contain one of these counterfeits." Most of them, fortunately, are lithographed, so that the trained eye of a practised philatelist can readily distinguish them from the genuine stamps, which are rather finely engraved. Look at your specimens very closely, "H. V.," and see whether they are coarsely printed like the illustration given here (a reproduction from a forged specimen), with the lines occasionally broken or uneven, and the fine work of the background blurred in parts. If they are, then you may safely conclude that they are counterfeits; but even if such is not the case you must not too rashly assume that they are genuine, for some of the later forgeries

A forged specimen of the P.S.N. Co.'s issue.

were engraved, and almost as well engraved, as the *bona fide* stamps.

The "Pacific Steam" stamps, by the way, are now always classified under Peru, and are so placed in the album. They are quaint old things, and in one respect unique—namely, in bearing an inscription of the weight to be carried as well as the postage to be paid.

A STORY OF SUDANESE WATERMARKS

"I have the 1, and 5 millieme stamps of the Sudan in both varieties of watermarks—

The "Stars and Crescents" watermark of the Sudanese stamps.

'rose' and 'stars and crescents.' Is there any great difference of value? I have heard that the 'rose' watermark was issued in error, and was quickly superseded by the 'stars and crescents.'"—*W. F. F., Great Grimsby.*

This reader has received rather a confused version of one of the little romances of philately. It has always been understood that the "rose" watermark, as "W. F. F." calls it, though it is more generally known as the "quatrefoil" watermark, gave great offence to the Sudanese Mohammedans because it appeared to them to be very like the Maltese cross, a symbol of Christianity. As a result of this (so runs the legend) the postal authorities very promptly substituted the "stars and crescents" watermarking—which, as the emblem of Turkish supremacy in the Mohammedan faith, would naturally be much more acceptable to the "Fuzzy-Wuzzies." That is the story, but it is a grossly exaggerated one. So far from the new watermark being rushed out in a great hurry, nearly four years elapsed between the first issue of the "quatrefoil" and the first issue of the "stars and crescents" watermark. There would have been a change in any case, as the quatrefoil was a "single" watermark, and at that period the change from the single to the multiple form was being made throughout the list of British Colonial stamps: but probably it is true that the feelings of the natives, as communicated by the local sheikhs, did influence the Government to adopt a multiple of "stars and crescents" instead of a multiple of "quatrefoils." I should advise "W. F. F." and other Captainites who desire to post themselves up in these issues to read

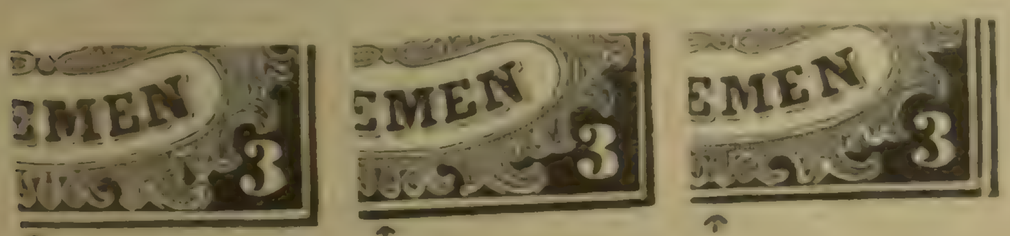
Mr. D. B. Armstrong's excellent handbook on "The Postage Stamps of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan," just published at the low price of 6*d*. by Messrs. Bright & Son, London, in their new "Philatelic Library."

On the question of values there is nothing much to choose (at present) between one watermark and another.

THE TYPES OF BREMEN STAMPS

"I have one specimen of the 3 grote, Bremen, 1855, and two of the 5 grote (black on rose) of 1856; and should like to know how I can decide to which of the various types they belong."—*A. L. P., Westminster.*

The types of these Bremen stamps can only be shown clearly by enlarging those portions of the designs in which the most marked variations occur. Let us take first the 3 grote, black on blue, of the issue of 1855. Here the point to study for a ready and rapid identification of type is that portion of the scroll-work at foot which falls under the "EM" of "BREMEN." I reproduce this portion of the design as it appears in Types 1, 2, and 3. respectively. The little arrows will help to indicate to the reader the exact point referred to. In Type 1 it will be seen that there is only one perpendicular line within the elliptical space at this part of the design; in Type 2 there are two vertical lines within the same ellipse, and in Type 3 there are three lines.



1. 2. 3.

The other stamp inquired about by "A. L. P." —the 5 grote, black on rose, issue of 1856—shows two types which can hardly be distinguished one from another without the aid of a fairly strong glass. When magnified, the lower left-hand portions, as shown in the illustrations given here, will reveal certain differences in the lines of the groundwork. Glance, for instance, at the lines at the left of the label carrying the value "fünf grote," and it will be seen that there is a marked difference in their formation as between Types 1 and 2.

1. 2.

NOTABLE NEW ISSUES

Argentina.—There has been another new issue for the Argentine Republic since I last wrote on the subject. No battle scenes or portraits of gallant revolutionists this time, but a placid agricultural subject—a husbandman tilling the soil, a rising sun, and so forth. It is not difficult to guess that the design was probably inspired by the French "sower" stamps. A curious fact about these new Argentines is that the lower values are apparently to be of a smaller size. I do not know to how far this principle of size-for-value is to be followed, but Messrs. Bright & Son, in sending me specimens, point out that the 2 centavos, purple brown, is considerably smaller than the 5c. rose or 12c. blue. These three are the only values issued up to the time of writing.

Canada.—As usual, the great North American Dominion has beaten the Mother Country with her King George postage stamp, the head of His Majesty on the new Canadian stamps being generally acclaimed as a much finer and more impressive bit of work than the home product. At the time of writing only the 1 cent green and 2 cents carmine have appeared.

The new Canadian and Indian King George stamps.

India.—Here also is the new King George stamp for India, which was first issued to the public on the great day of the Delhi Durbar.

Iceland.—There are some more stamps of the "Jon. Sigurdsson" issue, of which the 4 aur was described in THE CAPTAIN some time ago. The new comers are: 1 aur, green; 3 aur, brown; 6 aur, grey; 15 aur, mauve; and 25 aur, orange.

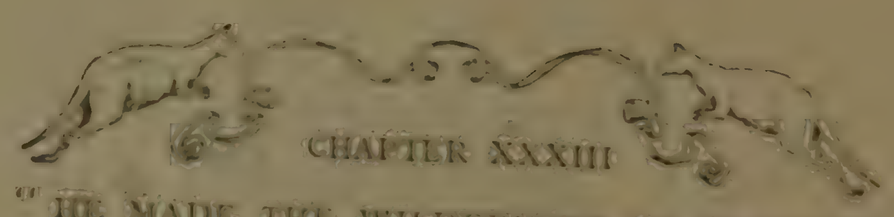
THE LOST EXPLORER

A THRILLING TALE OF ADVENTURE IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH

By John Mackie

Author of "The Heart of the Prairie," "The Rising of the Red Man," "Black Man's Rock," "In Search of Smith," etc., etc.

Illustrated by John de Walton



CHAPTER XXXIII

"HE MADE THE WILDERNESS TO FLOURISH"

AT that moment my uncle appeared with the Queen, and it was evident that he was speaking his mind to Her Majesty pretty freely. Afterwards he communicated the gist of their conversation to me. It was as follows:—

"He taxed her with keeping the white man, whose life was so valuable to his fellow countrymen, a prisoner all these years. He said that it was no wonder the hand of the white man had been against them in the far places, and where the big smokes rose into the air. They had kept a good and inoffensive man from his wife, his family, and his countrymen for a lifetime, and surely there was nothing that could be urged in mitigation of such a cruel and great injustice.

"O Big Voice," said the Queen, "you forget what I once told you. When we found Wah-to-mah in a land that lay far to the south and east, and which was within the taurai, or boundary, of a hostile tribe that would certainly have killed him had he fallen into their hands, Wah-to-mah was sick nigh unto death. When we nursed him back to life, and brought him hither, he was, as I have told you before, possessed of a spirit. He was not the man that he had been, for seeing his comrades drowned, and by reason of the sufferings he had undergone, his brain had been turned. For weeks and many moons, ay, and for many seasons marked by the coming of the floods, he was as a child, and unfit to look after himself. For many seasons he remained so, and showed no desire either to live or to leave us. Only once, as I have said, he tried to do so, and but for the fact that we followed him up into the wilderness and brought him back, he would certainly have perished. Had we wanted to restore him to his countrymen how could we journey to them, seeing the way lay through the land of great and hostile tribes, which, generations before, had driven us into the wilderness, and who refused to become reconciled to us?"

"I suppose your difficulties were greater than any white man can understand," admitted Dick Jardine. "But how is it that he wrought such changes in the well-being of your race?"

"When we came hither," said the Queen, "we only succeeded in reaching this place by long and heart-breaking marches through waterless deserts, where white men would certainly have perished, and where only black people who can interpret the signs of Nature can exist. Wah-to-mah, in his untroubled periods, realising

that it was useless to attempt to leave in the dry seasons, applied himself to teaching us how to overcome the natural drawbacks of the wilderness, and how to make grass and trees and yams grow where none had ever grown before. One of the few things he had saved from the disaster that had overtaken his party was a small bag of roots and seeds, and the fruits that ye have just partaken of are the products of the same. Moreover, they have done away with the necessity of us wandering to find food, and have opened up to us lives of healthful employment with time for social improvement. Do you see that great lake?"

"Yes; and it seems to me it has made you independent of the dry seasons. I never before knew that the black people of Australia understood irrigation, far less planted, and sowed, and grew things."

"Well, that lake was not here when he came. It was Wah-to-mah—the man who looks at things—who saw the possibilities of the dead and horrible valley which is now filled with these clear waters. At the far end of it he made us camp, and pointed out to us what we might accomplish by labour. He called it 'constructing a dam.' For many moons, ay, and seasons when there was no rain, he made us carry and roll great rocks and stones into the narrow neck of the valley at the far end. We worked, and worked, and the great barrier of rocks, into which clay and ant-beds were wrought, grew, until it seemed that nothing on earth could remove it. But still he urged us to continue our labours, and to keep on strengthening it, until we thought that surely we toiled needlessly. But Wah-to-mah knew what he was doing, and the results have justified the toil. When at last the floods came the great lake which ye now see sprang into being; and in the driest years it is as big as ye see now. Moreover, fish-spawn was brought to it from distant waters, and it is full of fish. Wah-to-mah taught us how to cut canals, and to cultivate the soil. But you see for yourselves how the wilderness has flourished. And we owe everything, and much more than I have told you, to the old white man."

"But," said Dick Jardine, who looked, as he indeed was, deeply impressed by what the Queen had told him, "do you mean to tell me that Dr. Leichardt became so absorbed in the great things he was doing for your people that he forgot all about himself, and those whom he had left behind in the big smokes, by the great salt waters so far away?"

"No, he did not forget those whom he had left behind; but he seemed to realise the impossibility of crossing the waterless deserts, and passing through those great forests where hostile black people lurked. In his endeavours to raise us—whom some of you whites, I understand, have said cannot be raised—he found a new interest that filled and took possession of his life."

"I admit that there is much truth in what you have said, O Queen. You have evidently talked much with Dr. Leichardt, whom you call Wah-to-mah. But, of course, O Queen, if Wah-to-mah recovers I must take him back to his own people."

"It will be many moons before you can hope to stir from here when once you see all the land around this great rock become one vast sea, O Big Voice. You also talk big words, but these I can forgive for the sake of Wah-to-mah, who has done so much for us. No, if he lives, and desires to return with you, we shall not prevent him—though our lives and homes will indeed be desolate without him. For the sake of your countryman, O Big Voice, there is nothing we will not do to help you. Remain here while the floods last, and command us. Look upon all we have as yours. We owe you white people a debt that we can never repay. Now, while Wah-to-mah sleeps, I must go and see to gathering all the people with their goods upon this rock. There are numerous galleries and caverns that you have not seen yet, O Big Voice. There is one great chamber I will have set apart for your horses, and the thing that goes on wheels. If you care to come with me, I shall see to the housing of your party."

"I thank you, O Queen. I shall go with you. Hello there, Eric! Come and behold a sight such as probably only Dr. Leichardt has ever seen before, and which the chances are you may never see again. But the day is far spent, O Queen, and your people from the outlying parts will have their work cut out getting in in time. Hurry up, Eric!"

I joined my uncle and the big Queen. We made down the mountain by the path already referred to. The old King by this time had marshalled his head men, and was deputing them to certain districts to superintend the people coming into the great Gibraltar of the desert for shelter. I noted that there was little or no confusion anywhere. Everyone knew what was expected of him or her, and it was obvious to me that every family had its

allotted place in the great galleries and under the sheltered terraces of the rock.

By this time the great black cloud had travelled up from the south-west; but fortunately for the migration in progress, it went over the great lake, and passed eastward. It was a terrifying sight, for from its black folds there came jagged lightning and sheets of fire, with appalling crashes that made one's heart stand still. They deafened and dazed one by their frequency and intensity. On our way we passed a constant stream of black people coming up. Everyone carried heavy burdens, evidently food and personal belongings. It was as if the inhabitants of the district were preparing for a sudden siege. And so they were, for the thirsty desert land where the mirage danced would soon be changed into a great sea, and anyone who could not get shelter in time would certainly perish. There were some, however, I was told, who remained with the great canoes on the big lake.

"I notice, O Queen, that you seem to have been preparing for this for some time," observed my uncle. "I see that already much food and belongings have been stored in the galleries and in the granaries on top of the rock. Some years have elapsed since there has been a flood. How did you know of the approach of this one?"

"By many signs, O Big Voice," said the Queen. "I thought that you would not have required telling; but I suppose you merely ask me that this lad who is with you may be enlightened." She turned and addressed herself to me. "If you have noticed the ants this last moon," she said, "you would have seen that they were deserting the lower parts of their great mounds, and were adding to the tops of the same. Indeed, in low-lying places they have been leaving their mounds altogether, and taking to the ridges. But they have not been alone; nearly all animals and reptiles have been leaving the plains, and moving to the high places. These ants have seen what man has been unable to perceive."

I confess the Queen's words somewhat surprised me, and I now began to realise the true significance of Leichardt's influence on this supposedly low-grade people. Now, when I thought of it, I called to mind the great explorer's earlier journals, especially that one which treats of his journey across Queensland and the Gulf Country to Port Essington, and the manly and deeply religious spirit which breathes in every page. Like Livingstone and some other great explorers, Leichardt realised that he owed a duty to mankind, and that without the spirit of this religion showing in his attitude towards his less-favoured fellow beings, the conquest of the wilderness degenerated to a mere love of adventure, a thirst for fame, or selfishness. True, Livingstone, like Gordon, died before he saw the fruition of his life's work, but millions of human beings to-day testify to the success of their high-souled efforts. When I thought of what Ludwig Leichardt had done for these savage people, I realised for perhaps the first time in my life what true greatness meant.

When we reached the plain an extraordinary sight presented itself. In the quickly passing twilight the people were completing the tasks they had doubtless been busy on for days. One thing I thought strange was the great quantity of timber they carried up into the galleries. They even lugged up large canoes, which could have seated several people comfortably.

It was evident the tribesmen must have already made most of their preparations, for they swarmed up the principal entrance to the rock in good order, and even with a show of cheerfulness. Now that the first alarm had passed, there were no signs of fear, or that they apprehended any catastrophe.

"I expect it means a supply of fresh water in the great lake, and a general rejuvenation of the fields when the floods subside," observed Dick Jardine. "There will doubtless also be many advantages arising from this flood that we cannot even guess at. Hello, here is the team and wagon, and the King himself superintending operations! Look, he has ordered the men to take out the horses and lead them up into one of the galleries, and he's going to put on his subjects to drag the wagon up by hand. Look, they're getting a long rope ready. Bravo, your Majesty. Long live the Yuculas! Hurrah!"

"Steady, O Big Voice," said the Queen. "The roaring of the thunder my people understand, but the distressing noise you create in your throat is something beyond them. Besides, you will scare the children and the poor horses."

CHAPTER XXXIV

AN HISTORICAL INTERVIEW

WE stood on one of the terraces about a hundred feet or so above the plain, and my uncle had seen to the stabling of the team in one of the galleries. They would

It was a terrifying sight, for from the huge black thunder-cloud there came jagged lightning and sheets of flame, with appalling crashes that made one's heart stand still.

be quite dry and safe there for an indefinite period. There was also a sufficiency of dried grass, and a species of wild pea or vetch, so that there was no need of apprehension as to fodder.

The Queen, my uncle, and I stood on the edge of the terrace, and looked into the gloom of the night. Here and there, on the plain, bright points of light moved about, and even on the lake itself could be seen the flicker of torches as belated Yuculas made haste to secure fishing boats or canoes. Everywhere on the platforms and galleries of the great rock bright fires glowed cheerily.

It was indeed a terrifying spectacle to witness that tropical downpour. The gallery where we stabled the horses and stored the wagon was overhung by the projecting cliff, so that we were comparatively dry and comfortable. It was fortunate that there was an ample supply of firewood, for it became cold, and it was necessary to light fires. The King had given orders that this particular gallery was to be reserved for us, so that we were not inconvenienced by curious black people. The Queen intimated that there was a large empty hut, well roofed with bark, next to that which Dr. Leichardt occupied, and it might be as well if my uncle and I occupied it.

"I think we had better accept the Queen's offer of accommodation, Eric," said my uncle. "I've seen enough since I've been here to trust these blacks. I never thought the time would come when I would trust Australian aboriginals. But there is a primitive Christianity amongst them which is none the less potent because it is simple, and I am sure that we can put faith in the people whom Leichardt has had the teaching of for years. Immediately after supper we'll carry our swags up to the top of the rock. I've got some clothes and things I want to give Dr. Leichardt. I left him asleep; he might be awake when we get back to him."

That evening our fare consisted almost entirely of fish and vegetables. It was as pleasant a change of diet as it was beneficial after our somewhat circumscribed fare, in which salted meat and tinned goods had largely figured. One luxury in particular which we now enjoyed was a plentiful supply of goats' milk. Every family seemed to keep a few of these useful animals.

The rain still poured down. The deluge never seemed to slacken for a moment.

"You'll see a changed landscape to-morrow if it keeps on like this," observed my uncle. "But it is not the actual amount of rain falling here that will cause the change. It has doubtless been raining in the mountains and in the neighbourhood of the heads of the dry rivers and watercourses for days. It is more than likely they'll come down in flood—a solid wall of water—during the night, and to-morrow morning you will see the effect for yourself. It was one of these floods, as you know, that destroyed Leichardt's party. But put on your oilskins and sou'wester, and help me carry these parcels. The doctor may be awake now."

For the first time we donned our "slickers," which we had provided ourselves with against the wet season. Drovers and overlanders in tropical Australia invariably used them. We ascended the winding terrace, and it was a curious sight to observe the little family groups seated and crouching round the fires, discussing, doubtless, the illness of Wah-to-mah, the benefactor of their race, and also the probable duration of the floods. But that their principal theme was Leichardt was obvious by their thoughtful demeanour and the way in which they shook their heads.

Arrived at the summit of the plateau we had, of course, to leave the shelter of the cliff, and face the deluge. The rain simply poured off our oilskins in streams. A few minutes more and we reached the broad verandah of the log house. Here we removed our outer garments, and hung them up on pegs. We could see there was a light inside, and that the King and Queen and a couple of black fellows were present. A brazier of clearly burning and smokeless fuel stood near the doorway. It was a dry interior, and quite comfortable. At the head of the bed, and against the wall, a clear light burned.

"Ah, you have come back," said Leichardt, and the light of welcome shone in his eyes.

He had strong, yet clearly cut, features, and that expression, suggestive of both the dreamer and the man of action, which is said to characterise him who has lived in the lonely places of the earth, and held his life in his hand. Having for years been prepared to meet death at any moment, he possessed that serenity of mind which, reflected in his face, imparted to him a distinction one only sees in the highest types. His face was the face of a patriarch—a benefactor of his race.

"I did not want to disturb you sooner," said my uncle. "Besides, I have been seeing to the housing of my party, and the safety of the wagon and horses. Our friends here"—he indicated the old chief and the giant spouse—

"have been most kind. Without their help I would have been in a bad way."

"I am glad," said Leichardt. "Yes, our friends are good." It was pathetic to note how the black people watched his face while he spoke, and how his words seemed to please them, though, doubtless, they did not understand him literally. "But I have much to speak to you about. I want you to tell me how the world has been progressing all these years. I want you to tell me about those in Brisbane and other places, who are still dear to me, though I suspect they are mostly dead. I want to give you a message to the world I once knew, for I feel that I have only a short time to live, and it will comfort me to think that my fate has not remained merely a matter of speculation to those who may have had an interest in my work and myself."

"What you have to do, doctor, is to get well, and return with us to civilisation," said my uncle. "But before we begin to speak about these things, let me give you some necessaries I have brought with me. Here are some simple remedies which you will understand. And here are pens and paper, which you may want us to use, and Eric, my nephew here, will be your secretary. But I have already introduced him to you."

Late into the night we sat, and my uncle—who must have been a born narrator—took up the story of Australia's search for the missing explorer whom he now told it to, from the date of that last letter of his, which was forwarded from McPherson's Station on the Cogoon River, and dated April 3rd, 1848. He also told him, what must have sounded to the aged explorer like a romance, of Australia's development and progress; of the discovery of gold and other minerals; of the vast agricultural and pastoral interests; and of the repartitioning of the colonies. In his turn, Dr. Leichardt told us something of his life with the blacks, and how he had adapted himself to his changed conditions.

It must have been close on midnight when my uncle rose and apologised for having stayed so long. He was afraid he had been thoughtless and selfish. He would leave him the things he had brought, and would come again next day, when they would have another talk. He had amongst his belongings views of Brisbane, and Sydney, and Melbourne, and some other places which probably did not exist in his, Leichardt's, time. In the meantime he would bid him good-night.

My uncle and I shook hands with Dr. Leichardt ere we retired, and it was pleasant to hear from the aged explorer that our coming was something of which he had dreamed, but had hardly dared to hope for, for many long years. Moreover, it was as if our coming had lifted a cloud from his brain. What my uncle had told him about the death of those who had been dear to him was only what he had long ago anticipated. He felt that now, his life's work being finished, he could look forward cheerfully to the natural end—that end which, to the man who has lived aright, ought to be the Beginning.

CHAPTER XXXV

WE MAKE OUR PLANS

I COULD hardly sleep that night thinking of the momentous happenings of the day. We had met the great Leichardt and talked with him, and we had cleared up the mystery of his disappearance. The excitement and the arduous happenings of the day at last told upon me, and I fell asleep in the rude but comfortable couch of soft grass and coarse cloth over which I had spread my blankets. The old chief or the Queen had doubtless superintended and seen to our comfort personally, for a cheerful fire glowed in the brazier. It was pleasant to lie there and listen to the drumming of the rain on the roof. We were experiencing comparative luxury in the last place we had ever expected it.

We must have slept late, for when we awoke it was broad daylight. A black man had just brought in two large wooden dishes of water, and placed them upon a bench. This was obviously for our toilets. He had also replenished the brazier, though the weather could hardly be called cold. The first thing I did on getting up was to go to the doorway, and look out. What I saw nearly took my breath away.

The far-reaching fields and canals which we had thought made the country look like a great coloured map, had disappeared, and in their stead was a grey waste of water. There was water, water everywhere as far as the eye could reach. Only here and there a clump of trees or the top of a ridge showed above the surface. The great lake had been merged into an apparently limitless sea. In the neighbourhood of the great rock, and where rows of huts stood with now, in many cases, only the roofs showing above the surface, a number of boats manned

by rowers, and in some instances under sail, moved from one point of vantage to another, rescuing live stock and salving hewn timber and household goods that had not been secured on the previous day.

"I find it hard to believe I'm not on some island in the Pacific," I said to my uncle. "The catastrophe that overtook Dr. Leichardt and his party is very plain to me now. How could anything hope to escape in a flood like that?"

"I believe," said Dick Jardine, thoughtfully, "that one of the reasons why this particular spot has not been discovered in the past has been because that, for two or three years after a flood has occurred, there has still been a great lake in the form of a circle surrounding it. It has, of course, turned aside explorers and prospectors. When at last such floods have dried up, a waterless desert has been none the less instrumental in turning people back."

I had been looking through my field-glasses at the leaden-hued surface of the waters when I observed something which suggested a fascinating idea.

"Uncle," I said, "I can see by the driftwood and the flecks of foam that there is a strong current bearing steadily north-east!"

"And it has struck you that if we had boats, or built a raft, we could drift or sail to the headquarters of the Nicholson, or the Barclay, or the Albert Rivers, and drift down to the coast again by way of the Gulf Country?"

"Exactly; and it would save us such a tremendous journey, not to speak of so much time. We are not so very far from the watercourses we saw only a few days ago, and, once in their neighbourhood, I should imagine the current bearing north and east would be strong and rapid enough for our purpose."

"Yes, if it continued running to the north. But what, as I've said before, if it veered round again to the south? It wouldn't be a pleasant thing to find ourselves stranded in the great Australian desert, would it?"

"Here is the Queen," I said; "let us ask her. She must know where that north-east passage will take us to."

We greeted the Queen cordially. She was a woman in a thousand, a born leader by virtue of her moral and intellectual worth. My uncle asked her what she thought of our project to get back to civilisation.

"You are in a hurry back," she said; "and we had hoped that you would stay amongst us for some time, not only to be a comfort to Wah-to-mah, but that you might teach us many things that would make for the advancement and happiness of our race. But, as hosts, we must not importune you. What you propose is not only quite feasible, but in times past it has been done. Wah-to-mah once tried it, but as I have told you before, he got into the wrong channel or current, and drifted south instead of north."

The Queen said that a huge raft on which we could place the wagon and horses would be the best means of attaining our object. There was any amount of timber on the rock which we could have. Every flood, such as this one, floated down from the forests on the far hills more material than they could make use of. We were welcome to as much as we wanted. We would also have to take forage for the horses, but there were large supplies of fodder on the rock, and we could have a supply of that. After all, if the current ran strong, and if there was a favourable wind, five or six days at the outside ought to take us back to the neighbourhood of the Gulf Country.

"We shall begin to construct that raft to-day, O Queen," said Dick Jardine. "In a week from now it should be ready. We have tools with us that will come in useful, and I have no doubt your people will aid us. We can construct the raft in the lee of the rock. Now we must go and see Wah-to-mah. I have much to see and speak with him about to-day."

We found Dr. Leichardt somewhat better than on the preceding day, but still unable to get up. He greeted us cheerily. "If you have come to breakfast with me," he said, "I hope you won't mind my wooden forks and spoons. I have made these things, as well as such crockery as I possess, in my spare time. Yes, it was I who taught the Yuculas the use of the potter's wheel."

We had brought Dr. Leichardt up from the camp such things and delicacies as we thought he would appreciate most. It was a treat to see his almost childish pleasure over such prosaic things as tinned fruit and asparagus under glass—there had been none in his time. He made a show of eating, but we could see it was merely to please us he did so.

We remained a week on the great rock, and it was the most interesting one I ever spent, or am likely to. My uncle and the others, with the help of hundreds of willing blacks, were busy during the day constructing the great raft, and as Dick Jardine detailed me to stay with Dr. Leichardt and act as his amanuensis, it can be imagined what a superlatively

interesting task was mine. The aged explorer had learned from Dick Jardine that his, the explorer's, wife had long since been dead, and as there was no pressing family reason why he should embark on our projected risky journey just then in his weak condition, he had declared his intention of remaining where he was until such time as he could travel comfortably overland. Hume had elected to stay with him until the relief party, which the Government was certain to send out to fetch him back to civilisation, arrived.

"You see, Eric," my uncle had said, "it will be some months before any expedition will be able to travel over the soft soil, and we are only wasting time by remaining here. We shall leave everything that can be of the slightest use to Dr. Leichardt in charge of Hume, who can be trusted to take every possible care of him. Besides, we leave him in the hands of the best of friends, and you have seen enough to realise that."

"It's a pity we couldn't take Dr. Leichardt with us," I said.

"I don't know that I'd risk taking him in his present condition, even if he consented to come. You see, the chances are our projected trip back to civilisation may prove a very arduous business. In fact, we may get wrecked or stranded, and it would be enough to kill the doctor if anything like that happened. No, when we get to Normanton or Burketown, as the case may be, the Government will send a boat round to Macarthur River with a fully equipped party, and I'll probably return with it. We can then proceed due south from that point, and we'll make this place in half the time we've taken to do it from Burketown."

"You think we couldn't wait and take him overland with us by wagon?" I asked.

"It would be months before we were able to move from here, and it would mean many more laborious months before we could expect to reach Burketown again. No, we must start within a week in order to take advantage of the floods and the current. It is the only practical course open to us, and Leichardt has said so himself."

In this circumscribed history of the expedition it is impossible to tell as I would like of my daily intercourse with the famous explorer, and of the hundred and one intensely interesting things I saw and heard of while living with that remarkable black race in the centre of Australia. Dr. Leichardt, being an anthropologist and naturalist of considerable attainment, told me some facts concerning the history of the tribes, and of the flora and fauna, that were more fascinating than anything I had ever read about.

So far as Dr. Leichardt's bodily health was concerned, he remained in much the same weak state. Still, there seemed no reason to fear any immediate serious result. His trouble, if such it could be called, was simply old age. It was pathetic to note how the black people were concerned in his condition. They used to come up to the hut in batches and inquire for him. If he saw them for a few minutes, and gave them a kindly word, they would go away quite pleased and satisfied. They realised what the wisdom of Wah-to-mah had done for them.

In three or four days the rains had ceased, but the current on either side of the rock ran steadily and strongly. There was no particular difficulty encountered in constructing the great raft, so we put it together in the still waters of the cove close to the entrance of the rock. The great sticks of timber were firmly tied together, and so fixed by cross-pieces that if the raft should strike any stationary object there would be no "buckling." It measured nearly a hundred feet long by about fifty in breadth. We constructed an ample shelter in the centre, and fixed the wagon securely at one end. Into it we piled bales of fodder, and to a long rail running lengthways we tied the horses head to head. We left four saddle horses behind in case Hume might require them. We managed to erect and stay a couple of serviceable masts, and with the spare canvas we had with us, Hume made two very effective square sails. This would enable us to take advantage of south-west winds. It would have been impossible to make our many arrangements in the time we did had not the blacks aided us most willingly and well. Indeed, they seemed to enjoy the work, and to take the greatest interest in it.

The morning came when the horses and stores were safely on board, and all arrangements were completed. Dr. Leichardt had said good-bye to Maskey and White and our two black boys on the previous night, and my uncle and I had gone up to the rock to bid farewell to the great explorer, and to take any last message he might wish to send back to civilisation. As we had expected, Hume did not at all seem to mind being left behind. He kept giving us all sorts of messages and commissions, and spoke about the coming of the relief party as if it were as certain as the return of spring.

I will say little about our leave-taking with the great explorer. Holding my uncle's hand, Leichardt told him it was impossible to express by words his gratitude for the unselfish efforts he had made on his behalf. He gave him an old man's blessing, which he also extended to myself, and to each of us he gave certain personal belongings, which, it is needless to say, will always be cherished possessions. He bade us farewell, and said that if it was the will of Providence that death should remove him before the coming of the relief party, then the people of Australia must rest assured of his gratitude for their efforts on his behalf. He sent his heartfelt thanks to them for the practical interest they had taken in his ill-fated expedition. What happened to it was as his good friend the Queen had narrated to us on one occasion. The axle of the dray, now on board the raft, was the only remaining relic of the expedition of 1848. His journal, which he entrusted to my uncle, would clear up many points which had doubtless puzzled the public.

A moment or two of significant silence in that hut, and we left Dr. Ludwig Leichardt behind us, with a look I shall never forget in his dimming eyes and on his patriarch's face. He had laboured for others all his life without thought of earthly reward, and his name is written largely on the scroll of glory.

We bade farewell to the old chief and to the Queen. As for Nick, as he had been detected in the act of stowing himself away on the raft, so as not to be separated from my uncle, it had been found necessary to keep him in temporary confinement on top of the rock. The Queen handed Dick Jardine something wrapped in coarse native cloth as he stepped on board, preparatory to giving orders to the scores of rowers in the small craft to tow the raft into the current.

"Take care of that parcel, O Big Voice," she said, with a cheerful smile on her homely features. "There are some wonderful stones in it, such as I believe are of very great value indeed in the big smokes by the salt water. It is a slight acknowledgment of your great services in bringing back Para, the future heir to the kingship. Of course, he will only be king in name, for a woman shall rule. Give one or two of those stones to your kinsman here. But do not tell those prowling dingoes amongst the whites where you got them. I do not want strangers who do not understand our conditions to come here and upset the kingdom that Wah-to-mah, in his goodness and wisdom, has set up for us. Now fare you well, O Big Voice, and if you come again be sure of a hearty welcome. May the Great Spirit, whom your white brother has made known to us, guard you."

As the raft began to move, towed by the many small boats, we waved our hands to the friends we had left behind. Hume was not there; he was in the hut with Dr. Leichardt. The King and Queen remained in the cove until the raft was caught in the current, and the small boats cast off their towing-lines. Then they ascended the great rock, where we could see them standing silently watching us.

It was a glorious sunny day, with a light breeze, and as the waves reflected the blue of the heavens, and here and there their crests showed snowy white, it was difficult to believe we were not on the briny ocean.

As we drew away from the great rock its giant bulk loomed up like a veritable Gibraltar. As did my uncle and the others, I thought it the most picturesque object I had ever looked upon in my life. No wonder the Yuculas had made it their headquarters. In a land of periodical floods it was indeed a haven. Then there was their own lake, which never dried up, and whose waters in the dry years supplied the means of continuous irrigation.

"It seems our friends are going to give us a Scotch convoy," observed my uncle, as smilingly he regarded the miniature fleet of canoes and sailing boats that still ran alongside. "They are the first blacks I have seen use sails. I suppose Dr. Leichardt taught them. My only regret is that we have not been able to bring him along with us."

"But he could not have stood the voyage, uncle. Later on, when we return, we may bring him with us."

"Between ourselves, I hardly think Dr. Leichardt expects to live to see that day. In any case, that great rock—the citadel of a prosperous people—will be a fitting monument to the good he has accomplished in the world."

"If the world will not undo the good he has done," I ventured.

"I think not. The Government will guard against that, and before the return expedition sets out, I shall see to it that all the rights of the Yuculas are safeguarded."

The current now bore the raft steadily along in an easterly direction. We hoisted the two sails, and by means of the huge poles acting as rudders we had little difficulty in keeping our unusual craft in proper position before the wind.

As we passed from the shelter of the rock and got out into the open, the wind caught us, and soon we were sailing at the rate of several knots an hour. Here and there we caught sight of the tops of giant trees, and more than once a line of breakers that betrayed the crest of some ridge.

"We will have to keep a sharp look-out during the night for such obstructions," observed my uncle. "Fortunately for us it is approaching full moon, and we will be able to see some little distance ahead. In a few days we will doubtless be able to strike the head-waters of some great river flowing into the Gulf, and then it will be comparatively plain sailing. Ah, our friends are turning! They'll have to beat back against the wind."

In a couple of hours or so the great rock became a mere blur on the horizon, and by midday it had disappeared altogether. There were now neither tree-tops nor ridges, and we knew we were sailing over the great desert. The steady breeze tempered the heat of the sun, and but for the fact that we knew the real perils of our unique trip were yet to come, I think we would have looked upon it as a pleasant sort of picnic.

At noon we enjoyed a welcome meal, and noted by the compass that the current and the wind bore us along in the desired direction.

Later on, when the sun sank below the horizon, and the moon arose, we kept on under the gleaming stars and over the mysterious face of that newly born sea.

As the great raft began to move, towed by many small boats, we waved our hands to the friends we left behind.

CHAPTER XXXVI

INTO PORT

IT would be impossible to set down here all the interesting things that happened to us during our most interesting voyage

back to civilisation. It was not all plain sailing. There were times when we thought the current was taking us out of our proper course, and we were filled with apprehension. It was a time of ceaseless vigilance and anxiety. Once we thought we were hopelessly lost in that far-stretching sea, for there was no perceptible current, and no wind to help us on our appointed course. Another time a great storm arose, and it seemed that only by a miracle were we prevented from being dashed against an ironstone ridge which suddenly cropped up out of the water, and around which there was a terrifying smother of foam.

But everyone behaved splendidly, and even Maskey, to our surprise, seemed quite in his proper sphere. The dangers with which we were menaced seemed to suit his peculiar temperament.

As for me, I could not rid myself of the idea that we were sailing on the great ocean itself. That we were actually in the central desert of Australia seemed a fantastic thought. Only that the flood water was somewhat heavy and dull and lacked the sparkle of the briny, our surroundings favoured the belief that we were shipwrecked mariners on a shipless sea.

But at last land showed up to the north and south, and the current made itself felt. We were hurried along at an ever-increasing pace. On the fourth day we found ourselves on what seemed to be a great river, with high, wooded banks not more than a few hundred yards distant on either side of us. And then we sighted our first glimpse of civilisation. It was a cattle station, and great was the wonder of the squatter and his men when they observed us. Goodness knows who they thought we were, and where we had come from!

"We're on the Albert River," said my uncle. "Look, the flood is only normal here. Had we delayed longer we would never have made it. We'd have been stranded in the interior."

It was about this time that Dick Jardine picked up and examined the rough parcel he had received from the Queen, and which he had almost forgotten. The "pretty stones" were of various kinds.

"Diamonds, opals, and sapphires, or I'm a Dutchman!" exclaimed my uncle, with something like bewilderment on his face. "Now I understand why she didn't want us to say where we got these gems. The kingdom of the Yuculas would be inundated by whites if they got wind of such a thing. There's riches here for every one of us."

And needless to say the gift afterwards resuscitated the fortunes of our family.

It would be difficult to describe our feelings when at last we reached Burketown. The first thing I did when the great raft had been made fast to the wharf was to telegraph our safe arrival to my people. And what a stir the news of the discovery of the long-lost explorer, Leichardt, made throughout the civilised world!

But there is no need to continue this narrative. Suffice it that within a week we were back in Townsville with our relations. It was not alone our altered fortunes that created such rejoicing. No reader needs enlightening on that point. The word "home" had a new significance and meaning for me after all those months of peril and adventure.

As for that famous man, Dr. Leichardt, whom we found and had to leave behind on that great rock in the wilderness, it is impossible to say more in this story, which only professes to deal with the mystery of his disappearance, and the finding of him after long years.

THE END.

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HOW TO ENCOURAGE BIRDS TO NEST

With Some Hints on Nest-Collecting and Storing.

By A. R. HORWOOD
(of the Leicester Museum)

CHARLES WATERTON was one of the first naturalists to encourage the nesting of birds around his house or in the grounds, and everyone who has read his "Wanderings" will admit that he must have derived therefrom infinite instruction and pleasure. Not only was he conscious of thereby affording many birds a sanctuary, but he was rewarded for this by being able to study their habits at first hand with ease and under extraordinarily favourable conditions.

It is strange, indeed, that bird-lovers and the scientific ornithologist had not adopted this very simple plan of encouraging and attracting birds around their own home, so to speak, before; for it not only at once disarms that suspicion and nervousness which wild birds exhibit when watched, but gives you a ready mode of studying them at any time, with the advantage of being able to write notes down as you make them.

To-day it is not owing so much to the recognition of the value of this mode of observation (new as it is), but rather to actual necessity in consequence of the possibilities of extermination, that bird sanctuaries are being formed by scientific bodies or individuals.

And what applies to the bird sanctuary to-day is true of the less collective method of establishing in gardens and shrubberies large or small bird tables or nesting boxes. Even in a small town garden it is really astonishing how many birds can be observed from time to time, including the wild but daring hawks. I have known as many as forty to be observed in one such.

It is the object of this article to draw attention to the possibilities of putting up nest-boxes, and as briefly to refer to the equally (up to the present) neglected subject of collecting *nests*.

The nest-box should be built with some regard to the size of the birds that are going to inhabit it, or some reference to their habits. It will not do to build too bulky a structure for titmice, for they will not use it. On the other hand, it should not be too small, or you will defeat your own ends again in another way. It is well, therefore, if you wish to attract several birds, to have several of different sizes and construction. Though, as a rule, a covered box with a sloping roof is preferable, yet for birds like the rook, thrushes, blackbirds, and others you need open nests.

One very important point is to know where and how to fix them up. In general, contrive to avoid placing them anywhere within reach of cats, for if they get a chance they will utilise your nest-boxes as traps. So it is well to place them against a wall where there is nothing that will allow a cat any chance of scaling it, such as ivy. A box placed against a trunk or in the fork of two boughs should be so fixed that there are no boughs below to enable a cat or other animal to climb up.

The box should be of good sound wood. Three-ply is light and durable, and quite cheap. Our first illustration shows a box suited for the house sparrow, which builds a big, bulky, untidy nest, usually with a dome, but in a hole this is dispensed with. Here the front is of three-ply. The roof may be

pitched and gabled, or merely sloped from the higher side, as here. The three sides and bottom of ¾in. deal are nailed together, one side being about 10ins., the others 8ins. and a foot long. The front has a round hole near the top cut in the middle for entrance. It is fitted

A nest-box suitable for a bird of the size of a house-sparrow, showing nest, eggs, and method of opening front.
Photo. A. R. Horwood.

in by having a piece of wood nailed on the ledge, which projects 2ins. to 3ins., and one all but flush with the front of the box, allowing the front to drop in the groove between. It is fastened above by a nail which fits a hole in the roof and projects below. The box is fitted with a small hole at the back by which to fix it to a wall or tree-trunk. In such a box sparrows and starlings will be perfectly at home. Smaller boxes made out of sections of tree-trunks with a smaller hole, and a false front which can be made to take in and out, will be best for titmice, tree-creepers, nut-hatches, and larger ones for woodpeckers or starlings.

One great advantage of having nest-boxes in your garden or precincts is that not only can you study the bird and its habits, but also its eggs, nidification habits, the young in all their stages. You note the daily habits, and thus draw up a diary of the life-history of each pair in summer and winter alike. And there is this further advantage, that after the young are fledged you can take the nest away without harming or inconveniencing young or parents (supposing, of course, that one brood only is reared).

You have here, then, an automatic method, as it were, of collecting nests in your own domain without going further afield. It is upon the principle of not evading the Wild Birds' Protection Act that this method is advocated, though the Act protects the birds scheduled, not their nests or eggs. But a more cogent reason is the real cruelty which is caused by taking a nest, or all the eggs, before the bird has reared its young. By all means, if necessary, take *one* egg, but *no* more. And if, as here advocated, nests are collected, let them be taken *after* the young have flown. This will apply not to the nest-boxes only, but to all birds' nests.

Having started upon this principle, anyone who knows the nesting sites of birds can make a most interesting collection, from that of the gold-crest, hanging suspended from a branch, to the bulky structure of a swan's, to take as examples the smallest and largest British birds.

You will have to take many and long excursions, but full of interest and incident, by Nature's byways and highways, and this will lead you into the meadows and fields, the cornfields, woodlands, along hedges and road-sides, across marshes, bogs, heaths, by the seashore, by lake and pond and river, everywhere. But now the question comes how shall we store them? Nests are such bulky, unwieldy structures as a rule. Moreover, a mass of nests placed together has a rather untidy appearance, and, last but not least, nests are a very fertile source of

Nests arranged in glass-topped boxes, or in trays, for arranging in a cabinet.
Photo. A. R. Horwood.

moth. This last must be avoided by thoroughly soaking them before they are put away in benzoline, which is a good moth exterminator.

While for museum purposes a wire nest-stand may be advocated, for the private collector a different means of storing them is recommended. This is by means of cardboard trays, or by glass-topped boxes. In the second illustration to the right a nest is shown in one of the card trays. This does excellently if you have cabinets, but if not the latter method will be necessary.

The cabinet for nests should be fitted with wooden trays that slide in and out on bearers, the distance between each being half the depth of the shallowest drawer or tray. This renders the system interchangeable. If the glass-topped box is used, then a series can be arranged just as the trays should be in the drawers by adopting some system of multiples, whereby in place of one large tray or box four smaller ones each half as long both ways can be interchanged. This allows for economy of space and variation in the size of adjoining nests. The interchangeability of trays above and below allows you to regulate the height also.

Then you must decide whether you show or collect eggs to place with the nests, or rather one of each kind of egg. If you do it is necessary to fix the egg in the nest so that it will not tumble about. This can be managed by using linen buttons and affixing the egg-shell to the hollow of the button, and the flat side to a neat ring of cardboard, which may be coloured a dull brown to match the nest.

Lastly, you will, of course, not omit to place with each nest, as in the case of those in the illustration, a data ticket or descriptive label. The former records the locality, data, name of collector, site, and any other details of interest, the latter describing the usual character of the nesting site, or simply the name, English and Latin, by which the bird is known.

Such, in brief, are the main hints that a beginner needs to guide him along the right road to success in forming a collection of nests or nests and eggs that may be of lasting value. The hobby is yet in its infancy, and till each one has tried for him or herself it will be wiser to leave more elaborate methods till later.

THE STRIDES OF SCIENCE

VERY MODERN PUPIL: "I would pray you, sir, before it is too late, to pause. You are stout, elderly, and afflicted with short-windedness, and your heart and other internal organs are probably in the condition known to the medical fraternity as 'fatty.' In addition to all this you have, to judge by appearances, lived, alas! not hygienically for a goodly number of years, and are in consequence sadly out of condition. In these circumstances, violent exercise, such as that which you now contemplate, might prove dangerous, sir—positively dangerous!"

(But, strange to say, he "got it" just the same!)

:: THE TIGER'S PREY ::

The Story of a Thrilling Encounter with an Indian Man-Eater

By T. C. Bridges. - - Illustrated by Harry Rountree

"YOU flogged him?" said Captain Dunsford, and his tone conveyed something more than surprise.

"Of course I did," replied Harvey, sharply. "Tied him up and gave him two dozen, well laid on with a riding-whip. Why, man alive, I caught him in the very act of stealing my cartridges!"

Dunsford shook his head solemnly. "It wasn't safe, Harvey. It wasn't, indeed. They're a queer crowd, these hill men, and if there's one thing more certain than another it is that Tippu Singh will never forgive you."

Dunsford had been spending an evening with his old friend, Frank Harvey, in the latter's camp. Harvey, a tall, powerful, and extremely capable person, who had knocked about all over the world, and had acquired a supreme confidence in himself and an equal contempt for all coloured races, had come to India for the cold weather to shoot big game.

Within twelve hours he had forgotten all about Dunsford's warning, and something which happened next morning drove the last thought of it out of his mind.

Umra, head man of a neighbouring village, came into camp with a terrified face, and, being brought before Harvey, informed him in broken tones that a huge tiger had just carried off his son, a boy of twelve, who acted as herdsman to his cattle.

Harvey called Tippu, who was his chief shikari (guide and huntsman), and Tippu and Umra talked together rapidly in their own language.

"Well, Tippu, do you think we can find the brute?" said Harvey.

Tippu, a tall, brown man with a lean, sinewy body and an inscrutable face, salaamed. "He will be in the Rialkote ravine," he said, quietly. "I know his lair, and there he will be lying during the heat of the day. Will the sahib follow him at once, or will he wait until night and shoot him from a *machaun* (a platform built in a tree)?"

Harvey well knew that to follow a tiger to its lair is about as risky a business as well can be. But, being supremely confident in his own skill with the rifle, he answered promptly, "We will go at once. Get my big express rifle, and I will also take a shot-gun, for we may be able to pick up some jungle fowl on the way."

A curious gleam showed for a fractional part of a second in Tippu's dark eyes. But it passed as quickly as it had come. He salaamed again and turned away. Twenty minutes later he and his master were marching up the steeply sloping valley which wound in snaky curves through the jungle-clad hills.

Winter as it was, the heat in the airless depths of the jungle was stifling, but Harvey was accustomed to heat and thought little of it.

Up and up they travelled, Tippu striding along with the curiously noiseless step peculiar to the native shikari. He carried the rifle, all the cartridges, and the food and water-bottle. Harvey had nothing but his big hunting-knife and his double-barrelled gun. The gun was loaded with No. 6 shot.

At last the jungle began to grow more scanty, and they came to an open space. Harvey saw that the valley had grown narrower and that brush-clad hills rose steeply on either side.

Tippu stopped. "We are near the spot now, sahib. Walk softly," he said, in a low voice.

A few hundred yards further, and they came to the mouth of a narrow ravine. A cloud-burst, falling on the hills above in years gone by, had sent down a huge rush of water which had cut a deep channel along the bottom of the valley.

Tippu stopped again and pointed. "This is the place, sahib," he whispered.

"Give me the rifle," said Harvey, in an equally low voice.

"Better wait a little, sahib. There is a steep rock-face to climb down, and you will need both hands."

Harvey nodded and went forward. He still

held the gun. He meant to change it for the rifle at the last moment.

As Tippu had said, they came to a sudden drop, a miniature cliff some 20ft. high, and as straight up and down as the wall of a house.

Below was an ugly chasm, the bottom a mass of rocks fallen from the cliffs which hemmed it in. Among these rocks grew some stunted bush. The trees which rose on either side met overhead, cutting off the sunlight and casting a gloomy shadow over the deep rift.

It was a nasty looking place. Even Harvey could not but realise this. And for a moment he wished that he had decided to tackle the tiger from a *mechaun*.

"It is very dangerous, sahib," said Tippu, as if voicing the other's thoughts.

The words stiffened Harvey. To show the white feather before the native was impossible.

"Where is the den?" he asked, briefly.

Tippu pointed to the far end of the rift.

"How do I get down?"

Tippu pointed to a tree, a jungle fig which had thrust its gnarled roots deep into a cleft between the rocks, and the branches of which hung down to within little more than a man's height from the bottom of the ravine.

Harvey nodded, and advancing to the extreme edge of the rock-face, sat down, and was in the act of slipping over in order to get his feet on the trunk of the fig, when a sudden sharp push from behind caused him to lose his balance.

He fell full length among the light branches of the fig; these broke, and he dropped with a crash into the bottom of the ravine.

If he had fallen on a rock he would probably have been killed on the spot. By the sheerest chance he tumbled straight into the centre of one of the clumps of bush, and this broke his fall. In an instant he was on his feet, unhurt, but utterly puzzled and furiously angry. Snatching up his gun, which had fallen beside him, he spun round.

Tippu was gone. There was not a sign of him anywhere.

Harvey drew a long breath, and, in spite of his iron courage, beads of cold perspiration broke out upon his forehead. For all of a sudden he remembered Dunsford's warning, and realised that Tippu had deliberately trapped him. But the full horror of his position had not yet dawned upon him. He still thought it might be possible to escape from this rock-rimmed ravine.

He looked round. The boughs of the fig were out of reach, and there was no other tree of which the branches came as near to the bottom of the pit.

He tried jumping. But he could barely touch small twigs which broke within his grasp.

Next moment a blood-curdling growl woke the echoes of the lonely place. Harvey snatched up his gun and spun round.

A huge, striped monster with glaring

Like a flash the tiger launched itself upon him with a gigantic spring.

eyes had emerged from a cave in the right-hand side of the ravine, and was advancing upon him noiselessly as a cat upon a mouse.

Harvey's heart gave a sick throb, but his nerve did not fail him. Raising his gun to his shoulder he stood motionless, awaiting the spring.

That the cartridges were charged with nothing but small shot he was, of course, perfectly well aware, and he had no hope that they would stop the onset of his terrible enemy. But there was nothing else to do. One step in advance or retreat, and the brute would be on him.

With its fierce eyes fixed upon him, the tiger crawled forward, the long hair on its belly sweeping the ground. Then, like a flash, it launched itself upon him with a gigantic spring.

Harvey pulled both triggers, then leaped aside just in time to escape four hundred-weight of maddened man-eater.

A fearful roar shook the sullen air, and Harvey with the tail of his eye saw the tiger land all in a heap among the bushes in which he himself had originally fallen.

But almost instantly the creature was up, and stood facing him with its short ears cocked, and head moving slowly from side to side.

Why did it not spring again? In a moment Harvey saw the reason. The small shot had entered both its eyes and blinded it.

But if its eyes were gone it still had its ears and nose to depend upon, and next moment, catching the sound of Harvey's breathing, it had sprung again.

He dropped, and the maddened brute flew clean over him, this time striking its head full against the side of the ravine.

Harvey turned and ran for the far end of the rift. He hoped there might be some way of escape in that direction.

Useless! The rocks were bare, and before he could make any search for foothold the tiger was after him again.

Guided by scent and hearing, it came down the length of the gorge with mighty leaps, roaring horribly at each spring.

Harvey spun round again and ran for his life.

For the next five minutes there followed a terrible game of hide and seek of which the stake was Harvey's life.

For a moment or two he eluded the tiger.

A mocking laugh came from above. He glanced up. Tippu, with a hideous expression of triumph on his face, was seated on the rim of the cliff.

"Run, white man! Run, great hunter! Ah, but this is fine sport! Better than a flogging! Better than many stripes!"

Harvey shook his fist passionately. "You vermin, I'll live to get even with you!" he muttered between parched lips.

The sound of his voice brought his pursuer on his track again. In sheer desperation Harvey awaited its onset, and struck the blind brute furiously with his gun over the head.

The stock snapped like a carrot, and he was left defenceless. Again the taunting laugh rang out from above.

Harvey realised that it was nearly over. He was utterly exhausted. A few more springs, and a few more frantic twists. Then the end.

Black despair had seized him, when from above came a fresh roar even more terrible than that of the monster that chased him. It was followed by a fearful shriek, a crunching sound, and a heavy thud.

Over the edge of the nullah came a second tiger, and in its vast jaws it bore the writhing form of Tippu.

It was the mate of the first.

Tiger and prey together struck the ground within a yard of the blind brute, and without a second's pause the latter turned on its mate with a hideous snarl. Instantly the two were locked in a frightful duel.

Harvey did not stay to watch the battle. Gathering all his failing strength he ran hard for the fig tree. Quickly rolling a big stone against the rock-face, he stood upon it, and then with a wild spring reached the lowest limb.

A minute later and he lay panting and exhausted on the top of the bank.

It was some time before he could gain strength to rise to his knees and pick up the rifle, which lay where Tippu had dropped it.

Below, the fearful struggle still continued, the two huge brutes rolling over and over, clawing and biting horribly.

Harvey, lying prone with his head just over the edge of the nullah, waited his chance. A moment later the sharp crack of cordite echoed out, and a heavy bullet smashed through the skull of the blind tiger's mate. A second shot ended the misery of the other.

Then, for the first time in all his adventurous life, Frank Harvey fainted.

THE END.

MODELS & MODEL MAKING

By HENRY GREENLY

Mr. Greenly, who is admittedly one of the greatest experts on model-making in the world, will be pleased to give any assistance he possibly can to Captainites interested in this splendid hobby. So if you are in doubt upon any point, or want any information whatever, write to him for advice, c/o "The Captain" office.

MODEL BOILER MAKING

AS in the case of model making taken as a whole, it is possible to split up the construction of model steam boilers into several branches, each involving processes not employed in the other. Small model "toy" boilers can be made of thin sheet brass rolled up in tinman's rolls, and seamed with a welt, as shown in the diagram Fig. 1, the joint being further secured by "soft-soldering" it with a copper soldering bit. The ends may be thin flanged caps or lids, which can be purchased at a few pence each. In choosing such caps those which are slightly convex should be favoured, as if they are flat and very thin the steam pressure may cause them to bulge—not that this

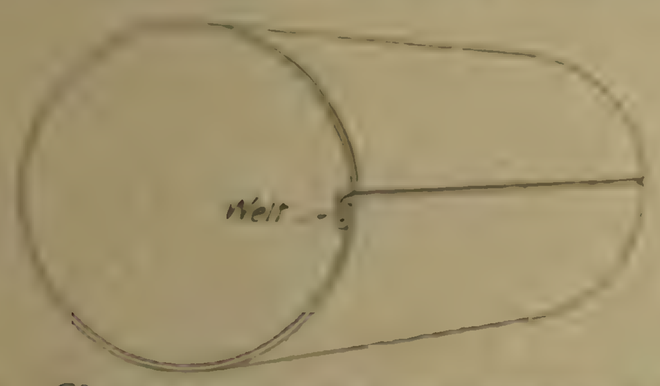


FIG. 1.—Sheet brass, rolled and seamed to make a model "toy" boiler.

would hurt them, as once the bulge is formed it will remain; but such a movement of the flat end surface under steam might cause the solder holding the flanges on to the barrel to crack, and a serious accident to result. Another point which is not always observed by professional model makers is that steam under pressure is generated at a higher temperature than in the open atmosphere. At 25lbs. per square inch the heat of the steam is 267degs. Fahrenheit, and at 100lbs. or 120lbs. pressure the temperature of steam is sufficient to melt some soft solders, so that the presence of the water—which is, of course, as hot as the steam—does not prevent a plain, soft-soldered joint failing. In all cases, therefore, it is wise to supplement the solder with some mechanical method of jointing. The welt already described is a good idea for low-pressure boilers, and even if the heat should make the solder plastic the steam can hardly blow it out of the small crevices between the folds, and cause the boiler to leak. The limitations of boilers made on this plan are, approximately, a diameter of 2½ins., a plate thickness of 1/32in., and a working steam pressure of 25lbs. The plate may be a trifle over 1/32in. thick, especially if copper is used where the maximum diameter above mentioned is adopted.

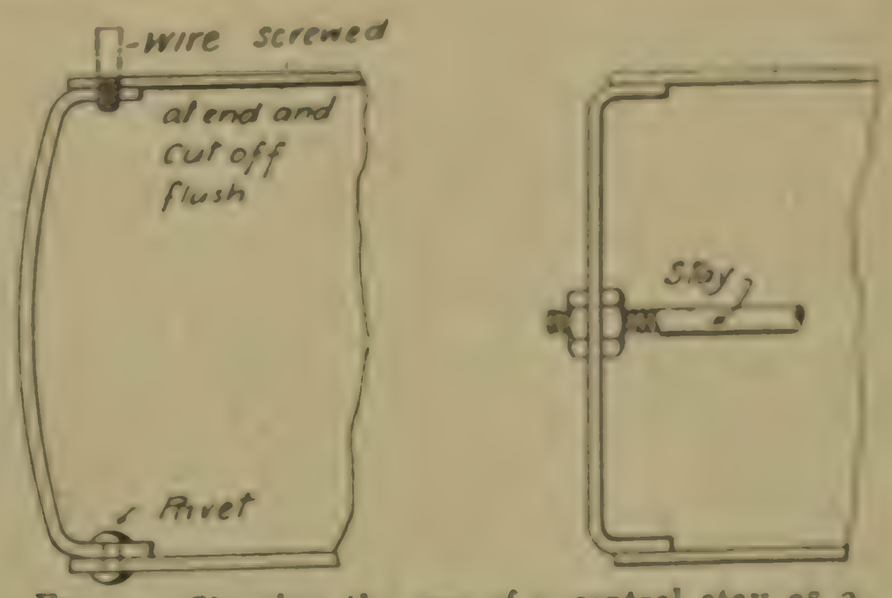


FIG. 2.—Showing the use of a central stay as a precaution against accident.

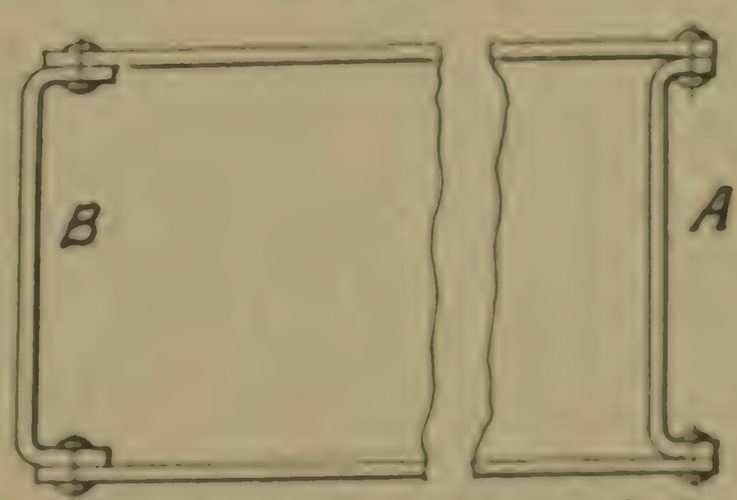


FIG. 3.—The best method of riveting in the end

FIG. 4.—Riveting on a round bar held in a vice.

As a further precaution against accident the flanges of the ends should be pinned or riveted to the barrel, or where the caps are stouter than the barrel a central stay may be used, as indicated in Fig. 2. The diagram Fig. 3 shows the best method of riveting in the ends. One cap fits with the flange inside, and must be riveted on a round bar held in a vice, as sketched in Fig. 4. The other end is afterwards fitted in with the flange outside, and if the boiler is used for a locomotive or undertype horizontal engine (see last issue) the smoke-box will hide the joint as shown in Fig. 3 at A.

For higher pressures a similar construction may be adopted, but a piece of thin, solid drawn tube is recommended. For even the highest pressures, tube with a thickness of metal varying from a 1 32in. in a 1½in. barrel working at 35lbs. to 45lbs. pressure to 1/16in. in a 3in. diameter barrel at 100lbs. per square inch may be made on the same system, the ends either being stout metal flanged stampings, or else sound castings turned to fit tightly inside the tube.

Where stampings are used they should be slightly concave-convex, and one and a half times as thick as the boiler tube. Flat ends, except those of the cast variety, will require stays. Cast gun-metal ends need not be stayed unless the diameter is over 3ins. or 3½ins., and if the thickness is not less than about two and a half or three times that of the minimum thickness of metal recommended for the boiler tube. For high-pressure boilers built in this way not less than six rivets per inch of diameter should be used, that is, say, a minimum of eighteen rivets for each 3in. boiler end.

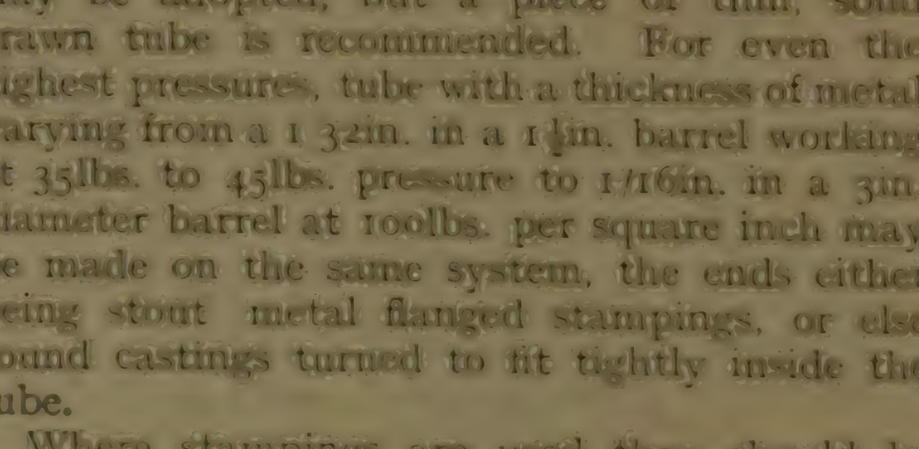


FIG. 5.—Showing position of flanged ends of the boiler when used for a model locomotive.

Soft solder is an alloy of tin and melts at a low temperature. A blow-lamp is unnecessary in small work; a soldering bit may be used to run along joints such as the welted joint already described, the sketch Fig. 5 showing the best type of "iron" for this particular purpose. Before riveting in the ends both the flange and the inside and edge of the barrel should be cleaned up and coated with solder, a process termed "tinning." Of course, before the solder is applied the cleaned surface must be covered with flux, which may be either resin, "killed spirits of salts" (chloride of zinc), or "flux-ite." The work should then be held with a pair of pliers over a gas-stove, and a stick of solder applied when the work becomes sufficiently heated. When it has completely run round, any superfluous solder may be wiped off with a damp rag, until only a "silver plating" of metal remains.

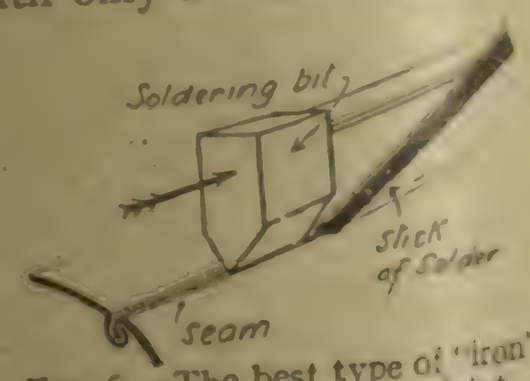


FIG. 6.—The best type of "iron" to use for the welted joint.

Subsequently, when the two parts are riveted together, the whole job may be heated, and the tinned parts will unite, the solder virtually caulking the joints. Possibly a little more solder will be required, but this can be run into the joint with the iron, attention being given to the rivets, the heads of which should be scraped clean and flux applied.

HIGH-PRESSURE BRAZED BOILERS

Brazed boilers cover a class of model steam generators of small size, but capable of being worked at the highest pressures. Brazing or silver-soldering is necessary in all small water-tube boilers. Not only is the temperature of the steam sufficiently high to melt a soft-soldered joint, but where parts such as water tubes hang down from a model boiler barrel or fire-box and have to rely for their strength on the soldering of the joint only, a solder like the brass-alloy used for brazing, or the more easily fused silver-alloy used in silver-soldering, must be employed. For all model-making purposes the writer recommends silver solder for uniting brass and copper objects in preference to brazing spelter. It melts at a lower temperature, and, although more expensive, the lesser risk of burning the parts being

joined will make its use more economical in the end.

Silver solder requires a red heat, and this can only be obtained by a gas blow-pipe or a petrol blow-lamp. The flux used is borax, and the parts—after being scraped quite clean, and bound or riveted together in some way—should be painted with a mixture of borax and

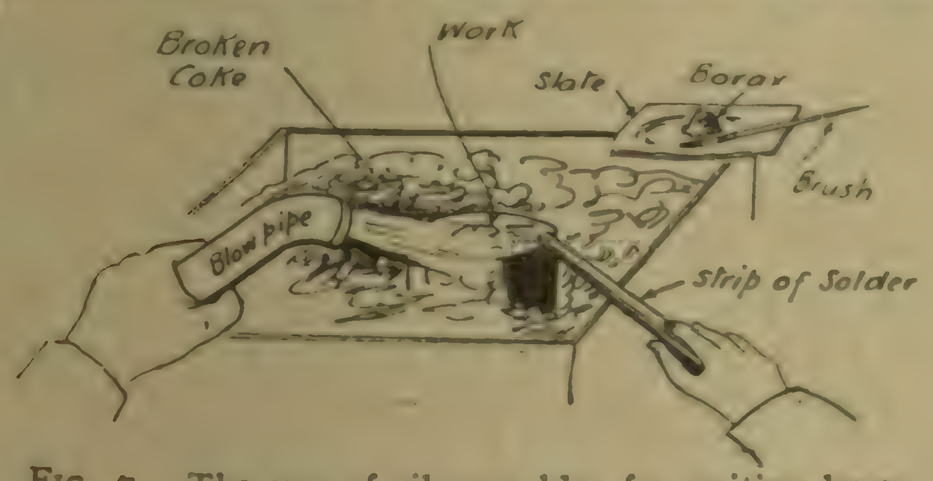


FIG. 7.—The use of silver solder for uniting brass and copper objects.

water formed by rubbing a moistened lump of borax on a slate. The silver solder (which is sold in thin sheets at 2*s.* 6*d.* to 3*s.* 6*d.* per ounce) should be cut into long, thin strips, and when the work gets to the required red heat the joint should be touched with the solder. One of the characteristics of silver solder is that it will not bridge large openings, but runs into the tiniest crevice. Under these circumstances joints should and may be close fitting.

When making a model water-tube boiler for an engine such as illustrated in the last article, if a powerful blow-pipe or blow-lamp is not available, or if the work of brazing has to be given out to a professional, some trouble and expense may be saved by combining the two processes "soft-soldering" and "hard-soldering." The latter process, under which category silver-soldering is included, must be done first. It is an axiom that brass or copper work which

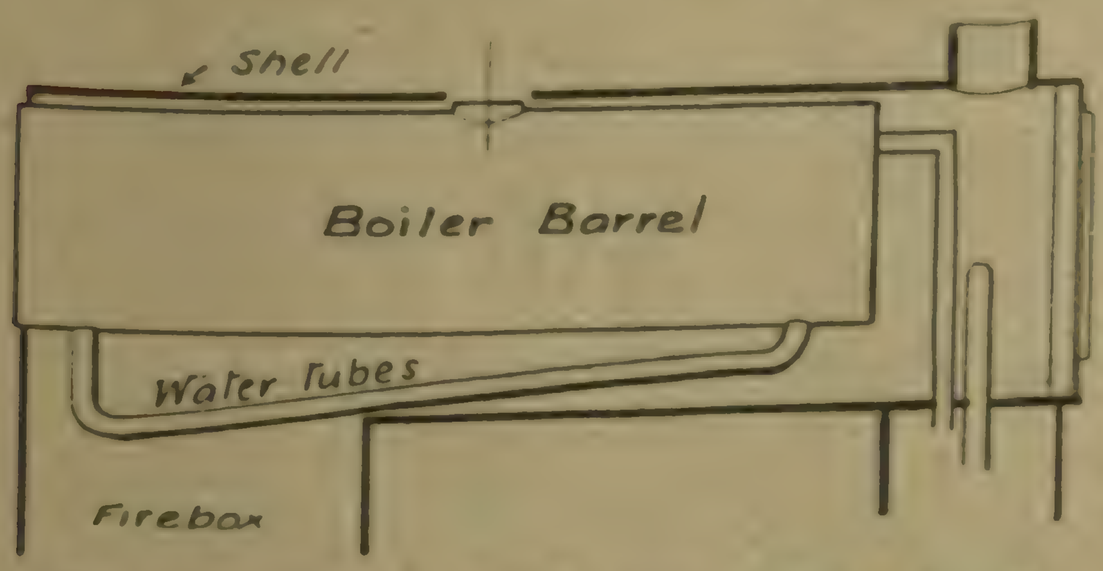


FIG. 8.—Showing the shape to which the water-tubes should be bent.

has been soldered with ordinary soft tinman's solder cannot afterwards be brazed or silver-soldered. The presence of any soft solder on the job would result in that part becoming "rotten," to use a colloquial term to describe the state of the metal after such treatment.

This being the case, the water-tubes should be silver-soldered to the barrel first. Both water-tubes and boiler barrel should be of solid

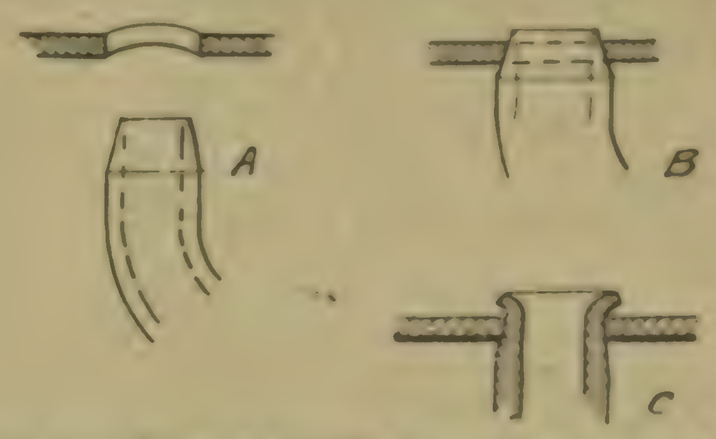


FIG. 9.—The processes of fitting the tubes into the boiler barrel.

drawn copper tube, and the former should be softened and bent to the shape shown in Fig. 8 first. The holes in the bottom of the barrel may then be marked out from the tubes after bending. To satisfactorily bend the tubes work with them in the long length purchased, and start with the fire-box end. When the short front upward bend is formed the water-tube may be cut off just above it, and another one proceeded with.

The ends should then be filed slightly conical, and when placed in the holes in the barrel the inside may be knocked over. The processes are shown more clearly in Fig. 9.

Before testing a joint for tightness care should be taken to see that the joint is thoroughly sweated with the solder.

FIG. 10.—Fitting the ends by spinning over the edge of the tube.

The flux (borax), after being subjected to the heat of soldering, is like an enamel, and may for a time make the joint steam-tight, although really it is not properly soldered. To remove this burnt borax the job should be put into a 5 per cent. solution of sulphuric acid and water*—termed among metal workers a "pickle." Except in the case of the smallest jobs the work should be nearly cool before it is placed in this cleansing solution, otherwise the joint may be cracked by the sudden contraction of the metal.

The next operation is to fit the ends. These may be soft-soldered, and to save riveting may be fitted by spinning over the edge of the tube in the manner shown in Fig. 10. This sketch also shows the various processes in proper sequence.

* Put the acid into the water slowly, *not the water on to the acid.*

Of course if there are any screwed bushings, for the fittings, required to be fixed to the shell, these may be either screwed and soft-soldered in, or, better still, silver-soldered on after the water-tubes. It must be remembered that silver solder is sold, like tinman's solder, in various degrees of hardness, and where there are to be several "heats" that with the highest melting point should be used first.

The outer casting for a model of the type illustrated in the last article should be made out of a piece of common brass tube. The smoke-box front may be a standard casting, and the back and throat plates may be of sheet material flanged and secured with a few rivets or screws. The air-tightness of the joints is not important so long as they are reasonably close.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Leslie Irving (Leeds).—A model submarine boat could hardly be anything but a clockwork toy such as are sold by most dealers from two or three shillings each. You could make a submarine from two suitable pieces of wood joined along the horizontal centreline. The upper part should have a metal cover through which the propelling machinery can be got at. The hole for the clockwork will require a water-tight cap. The horizontal "trimming" of the boat may be adjusted by a weight on a screwed rod running longitudinally in the lower part of the boat. All spindles and shafts passing through the skin of the boat must be provided with packed glands. As to altering the displacement, this in a model can only be done by removable weights.

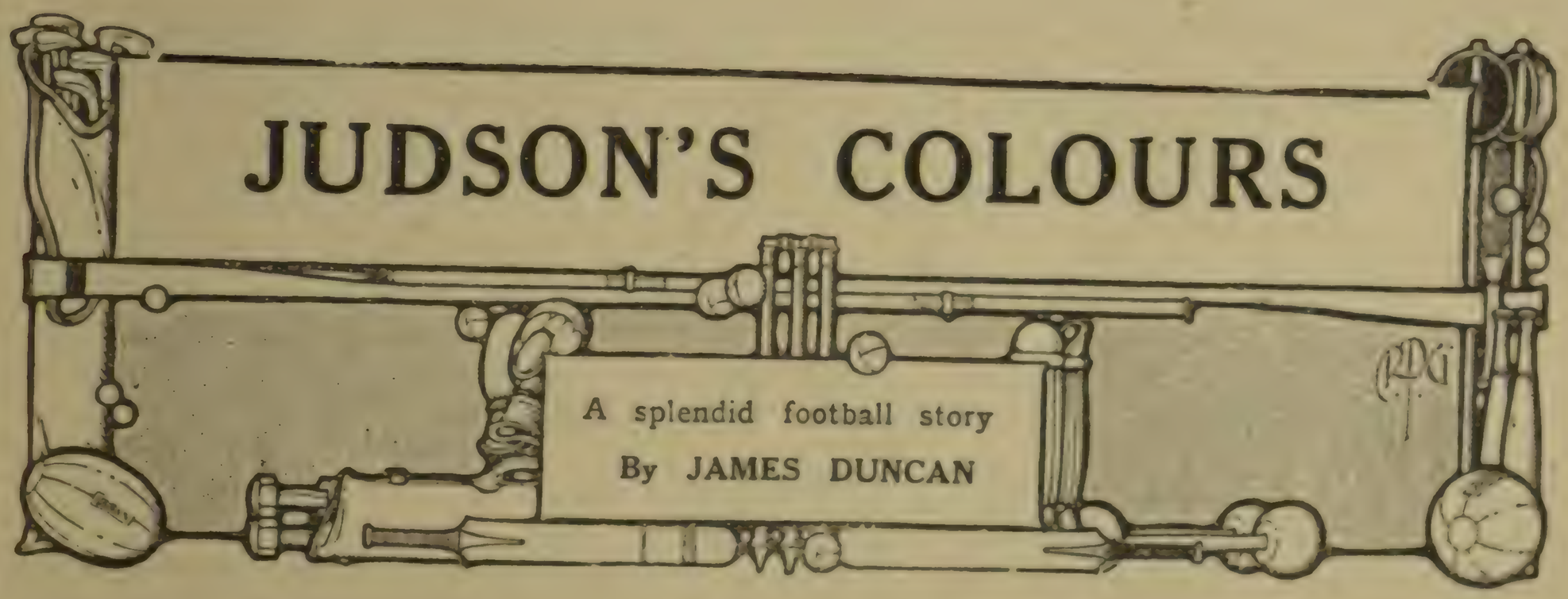
K. T. Pike (Eastbourne).—This must be left for a later article. How to make a model signal cabin is a subject requiring several pages of description.

J. C. W. (Exeter).—G.N.R. signals are peculiar in that the arm is pivoted in the centre. The design was adopted by this company after the Abbots Ripton accident, which was caused by a signal semaphore becoming jammed by the snow falling at the time. Send a stamped addressed envelope, and further information can be sent you.

THE THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE.

FARMER (to unwilling trespasser): "Hi! Why can't you keep to the path?"

JUDSON'S COLOURS



CHAPTER I

JUDSON was pleased when he returned to Bellgrove in September and found himself captain of the school. In natural course he had been bound to succeed to the title, since his predecessor had gone down in July, and the office descended always to the best scholar in the school.

Others at Bellgrove were pleased also. A few there were of the more seriously minded who shook their heads after the official proclamation, with murmurs about red tape and the danger of tradition. Judson's captaincy, they whispered, would let the old place down.

By the majority, however, Judson was hailed with unrighteous satisfaction. Brown had ruled them with a rod of iron; under Judson they promised themselves an exceedingly good time. They reminded one another pleasantly of his reign last year as dormitory prefect, of old Jud's "nonsense"—which none of them had ever "stood." And certain brawny members of the Fifth recalled how the new captain had gone in physical fear of them. How on one occasion he had literally fled from Fielding. And how, to escape ragging, he had bowed the knee to Paterson and Bates.

Besides, Judson was "no good at games." And, as Fielding aptly put it, "A man who's nothing but a beastly swot has no beastly right to be captain of the school! We've never had a captain who wasn't in the teams!"

Fielding could not rise higher than the Fifth, but he was the biggest man at Bellgrove, and skipper of football. Fielding was a man of mark. At his nod the kids trembled—at Judson's they only smirked.

Judson was small, and appeared timid. But Bellgrove may have forgotten that their new captain had brains.

"It's this way," he was putting it one night to Hayter, his only intimate, after three weeks' ragging had culminated in a particularly audacious outrage, "it's this way, Hayter. They know they've got a mug as captain. Oh, I see their point of view! So I've always meant to give them rope enough."

"Why rope enough?" said Hayter, looking puzzled.

"To hang themselves with, old man. The hanging commences to-morrow."

"I don't follow, Jud. A slackster can't make himself an autocrat in a twinkling!"

Judson had three great interests at Bellgrove. One was his work, the second will appear later, and Hayter formed the third. He was very fond of Hayter.

"Yes, Hay, he can," he said, quietly. "If he has the power behind him; and if he doesn't funk to use it."

"But you—look as if—you did funk, Jud!"

"I do, old man—I do funk it. And I shall go on funking it," replied Judson, with his curious smile. "But I'm not going to let them know it!"

"Then you fog me," said Hayter, impatiently. "Hanged if I can make head or tail of you!"

"Listen, Hay. I'll put it to you as I've thought it out. As dormitory prefect I couldn't keep order. Why? Because I didn't put my back in it. I hated the bother. I always wanted to get off to my work. And for another reason."

"Yes?"

"A dormitory prefect is not an 'autocrat,' to use your word. He relies largely on his personal authority—often on his fists. Defiance of his authority is no capital offence. Follow?"

"No, I don't," said Hayter.

"As dormitory prefect I chose to let things slide rather than tackle the trouble of fighting them. As dormitory prefect I had only myself to fall back on. But I'm jolly proud of being

captain of Bellgrove, old man, and as captain I'm an autocrat. I've an autocrat's power, *if* (and only if) I've the pluck to use it. To defy the captain means the Head, and possibly expulsion!"

"Well?"

"Well, however much I funk it, I'm going to be a terror. I'm going to start right in!"

"You don't mean to report them?" said Hayter, very quickly.

"No. But I'm going to rule them like a tyrant, till they come to their senses, Hay. It'll be beastly, but I dare say I'll survive."

Hayter regarded his chum curiously.

"You fog me, Jud," he said, at last. "But it looks as it you'd just discovered a well of moral courage, and you're about to draw on it."

"Then come and watch the first bucket drawn, old man!"

"When?"

"To-morrow, after second lesson. I've hauled Bates and Fielding."

When Bates and Fielding entered the captain's study in the morning they nodded familiarly to Hayter, curled in the window seat. Then they turned to Judson with broad grins. They thought Judson looked extremely pale.

"You've hanged yourselves, you two," he began, softly.

The pair answered with a loud guffaw.

"Bates, bring that chair. You'll find a cane in the cupboard, Fielding!"

Neither moved. They just grinned down at him. Judson bit his lip, and eyed them.

"Show finished?" laughed Bates. "Shall we pop off?"

"Bring that chair, Bates!"

"Fetch it yourself, Jud!"

"My name's Judson when I'm hauling you. Fetch that chair!"

Something in the captain's face persuaded Bates. He slouched sulkily to the chair, and banged it down.

"Now the cane, please, Fielding!"

A short duel of wills followed: but Fielding brought the cane.

"Bend over, Bates!"

With another grin—slightly forced—Bates assumed position. He would show old Jud what a farce the whole thing was! A bit of showing-off!

With the sixth blow he felt that a farce may have its limits. With the ninth he felt astonishment. At the last he howled.

"Bend over, Fielding!"

"Not much, Jud! You don't lick me like a kid. The footer captain's never been licked before!"

"Because he hasn't deserved it, Fielding. Bend over!"

Fielding was white now, white with fury. That old ass Jud meant it! He meant to lick him! To lick a man who'd often mobbed him last term! Fielding's dignity was up in arms; its wound smarted.

"Here—I say, Jud—no, hang it! I'm dashed if I'll——"

"Bend over, Fielding!"

And Fielding "bent." There was nothing else to do. After all—the little smug was captain of the school.

Judson felt somewhat sick when they had gone. His face was paler than before. And a whisper went round the school that morning which all who heard it scouted. But at dinner eyes kept turning to the centre table where sat the captain and the Sixth. They scanned him closely, with a new expression. Judson's silence was remarked.

It happened next day that some of the kids were creating an uproar in the corridor when they saw Judson approaching. They acted as they had never done before—they stole bashfully away.

Bates and Fielding designed, very naturally, to "make it hotter than ever for the smug." They called into their counsels Paterson, Judson's *bête noire* of the preceding term. Paterson had always bullied old Jud. The three were minded, however, to be careful of their personal dignity. They decided upon less hazardous measures.

If twenty or so of the lesser fry should be late for roll one afternoon it would be absurd, they argued, for Judson to blame *them*. On the face of it their argument seemed sound, but it had omitted to give due credit to Judson's brains. The small fry—who were late—received proportionate rewards. But Paterson, Bates, and Fielding were hauled into the study.

"What've we got to do with it?" growled Paterson.

"I'm not sure," remarked the captain. "But it's never occurred in such numbers before."

Bates grinned; then stopped, recalling his last interview.

Hayter was not present this time, and Judson's hand was trembling behind his back. He spoke very slowly.

"I'm captain here, Paterson. And I'm starting a new system. I'm not going to begin with

licking kids. I'm going to begin at the top. Bend over, Paterson!"

"We've done nothing!"

"You know best, Paterson. Would you rather go to the Head?"

"I'm jolly well dashed——"

"Would you rather go to the Head, Paterson? Or you, Fielding? Or Bates?"

They stared at him. They emerged from the study — fifteen minutes after — staring at each other.

CHAPTER II

A FEW days later Judson was sitting among his books. He felt cheerful. Things were beginning to go his way at last. He knew quite well that he was coming to be regarded as a tyrant, harsh to excess. The reflection did not ruffle him. He was tasting, on the contrary, the sweets of despotism.

A Liddell & Scott and a volume of Aristophanes were formally engaging his attention. But his eyes kept wandering to a parcel in brown paper, against which, in fact, the lexicon was propped. He sat so deep in thought that at first he did not hear the opening of his door.

"That you, Hayter?" he cried, without raising his head. The captain was a lonely man, and received few visitors.

"Mugging?" queried Hayter.

"Sort of," answered Judson, with his gaze upon the parcel.

"Or counting scalps, eh?" laughed his chum. "Great Scott, old chap, you've tamed them! The greatest beast Bellgrove ever had as skipper! That's the verdict."

"I've made things much more comfortable for myself, anyhow," said Judson, with his flicker of a smile.

"And for the school," said Hayter. "Hello, what have you got there?"

"Where?"

"There—in the brown paper! Come by post, hasn't it?"

"Oh—it's nothing; you can look if you like."

Hayter cut the string, and revealed a pair of football boots.

"But these aren't new boots!" cried Hayter in amazement. "They've been used."

"But these aren't new boots!" he exclaimed. "They've been used!"

"Yes," said Judson, quietly, "by me."

He was actually blushing.

"My dear man!" Hayter stopped, gulping down a laugh. "I never knew you played footer," he concluded, in confusion.

"I've never tried much—till last Christmas, at home," said Judson.

"Then what are the boots for?"

"Oh—I don't know, old man. I—I—thought I'd like to have them."

"You're a rum cuss, you know, Jud," said Hayter, and dropped into a chair. "Out with it! What's the little game? Let us into the secret!"

"Can't a man have a pair of Soccer boots if he likes?" parried Judson.

"No—decidedly not. Unless he uses them."

"But I have used 'em!"

"Not at Bellgrove."

"Is that my fault, Hayter?"

His friend stared.

"Seeing that you haven't tried to play since I remember you—it is," he said.

"Well, last year they always made me linesman. This term Fielding's never put my name down to play in Big Side."

"Because he doesn't think you play. Why don't you tell him?"

"Tell Fielding! A bit awkward — after what's passed between us. Eh?"

Hayter whistled.

"I didn't think of that," he said.

"But I did. Besides, a dog with a bad name—what happens to him, old man?"

"He's put to play in Small Side, Jud."

"Exactly. And I couldn't play in Small Side."

"Why?"

"A bit *infra dig.*—to play with the kids. *They'd* gloat a bit, wouldn't they?"

"Yes, it would be *infra dig.*" said Hayter, slowly. "I forgot that."

"And it wouldn't help my authority, either."

"No."

"I never cared for the game till last Christmas, Hayter. I played a bit at home, and got keen."

"But you didn't play here, when you came back."

"The dog—and the bad name, again. I didn't care to be rotted. I had enough rotting without that."

Hayter had nothing to say to this. He picked up the boots, and looked over them with a business eye. He was waiting.

"I don't mind telling you, old man," Judson went on presently, "quite between ourselves——"

"Sure!" snapped Hayter.

"That I believe I can play Soccer a bit. I believe I'm worth a trial in the team. Of course, you'll think I'm rotting."

Hayter looked up quickly.

"It's a bit startling," he said, with a slow drawl, as his eye ran over the captain's nervous little frame. "But if you say it I'd rather fancy you're right, Jud. After the—er—buckets, Jud."

"I believe—I've got an idea—of half-back play," stuttered Judson, avoiding his friend's eye.

"Well, what are you going to do? Tell Fielding?"

"No," said Judson, with an expression of disgust.

"Play with the kids?"

"No."

"Then why the boots?"

"How about the Soccer sixes—in November?"

"You don't mean——"

"Yes. I'm going to put my name down."

"Are you wise, old man? They'll take it as an awful spree, you know."

Hayter seemed a little anxious. He was thinking of the rough-and-tumble character of the "sixes"—that footer carnival, open to all, which was taken very seriously at Bellgrove. Duffers never entered their names for the sixes. But everybody who could play did, from the prefects to the kids. And when the entries had closed, the names were put into a hat, and each member of the eleven—if the entries were sufficient—received at Blind Fortune's hands the five with whom he would do battle for the cup. The sixes were grim, desperate, and earnest. The finest test of stamina and footer sense.

"But they'll stick you in goal, old man," said Hayter. "They'll only stick you in goal!"

"Can't help that," said Judson, with his queer smile again. "Though it's a rotten idea to my mind, Hayter, to stick the biggest crock of a six in goal!"

"Perhaps. But it's always done. Because attack counts most in a six, old man," said Hayter, lightly. "And you'll get some skipper who'll rag you. How about dignity, then?"

"Can't help that."

"But Bates may draw you—or Paterson—or even Fielding himself!"

"Yes, or some smart kid in the team. Let's pray the latter. But I'm keen——"

"You must be," Hayter snapped.

"I'm dead keen—between ourselves—to play Soccer for Bellgrove. I want my cap. So the dog with the bad name——"

"Will jolly well get hanged," said Hayter. "Don't do it, man!"

Judson smiled.

"I funk it horribly, old man," he said. "I funk it horribly."

Hayter shook his head.

"I thought it was another case of the bucket," he murmured. "You're a weird chap, Jud. But I hope you're in my six."

Judson threw his boots into the cupboard.

"Some risks must be run," he remarked, enigmatically, and turned to Aristophanes.

Bellgrove was delighted when the captain's name appeared among the entrants for the sixes. The situation was full of hope. Kids in the Third and Fourth, sprightly kids who were near their second eleven caps, found lively pleasure in the prospect of running up against their captain in the *mêlée* of a six. More than one method suggested itself of paying back old scores. And imagination played cheerfully round the spectacle of Judson in footer togs! Yes, they were very glad that Judson had put his name down. They hoped he'd stick to it.

But the captain's name came very near to disappearance. For fifty-six had entered, which meant that two of the aspirants must be scratched. The task of erasing such odd units always lay with the captain of football. His decision was absolute.

"Well," said Fielding, running his eye down the list, before he drew the sixes with his vice-captain and the committee; "well, the two worst crocks must go. Like his cheek, entering!" he added, and drew his pen with a splosh through the name of Tomkins Minimus, of the Second Form.

"There's another name that's worse cheek to my mind," said Bates, gruffly.

"Whose?"

"That!"

His finger was on Judson's.

Fielding dipped his pen.

"You're right! Why, the smug's never played. He may be school captain, but I'll show him who skippers footer——"

"But, I say, in his position, oughtn't we to leave him in?" This from Redmond, a quiet man in the Sixth.

"The choice rests entirely with me," replied Fielding, stiffly. "And I won't have hopeless crocks!"

"It isn't quite—er—nice, I think," hazarded Redmond.

Bates leaned across the table, and whispered something to Fielding. Fielding seemed to find it very funny.

"All right, Redmond," he remarked, with a chuckle. "Judson shall play." And he erased another name from the list.

But when he and Bates were pinning the draw to the screen, their faces wore broad grins.

"You were quite right, Bates," said Fielding. "I'd never thought of that. I would have been a juggins to scratch him!"

"You would, my man!"

"He'll be the clown of the piece, old man. By George, I wish he was in my six!"

"Never mind. Young Hunt'll curl his feathers for him!"

"A bit of a sickener for His Mightiness, eh? To be bossed by a kid!"

When Hunt Minor—a cheerful spirit, very fast at outside right—scanned his six on the screen, and at the bottom of it read the name of Judson, he bolted off to tell his friends. He went merrily, the bearer of prime news. And they received it with similar delight; but reminded him that it was a "bit rough" to have such a waster on his side. In any case, he retorted, he'd drawn a hopeless crew, and one more crock would make no difference. "The more the merrier!" laughed young Hunt.

As a centre-half Fielding was in a class by himself at Bellgrove. The luck, too, had favoured him. He had drawn one other colour, three useful members of the second eleven, and an active kid. His six was easily the favourite. Redmond's, a very level lot, were tipped as the most likely to effect a surprise. There was little to choose between the others, until you reached Hunt Minor's; and Hunt Minor's, as the school agreed, were hopeless. They were quickly installed as the butt of the competition—young Hunt's cripples.

"Er—where do you want me, Hunt?" asked Judson, with a diffidence he tried vainly to conceal, when they entered the field to the encouragement of derisive cheering, to meet Brown's in the first round.

"Goal, please," replied his skipper, promptly.

So Judson wended into goal, where he soon found too much to do to remember his disappointment. The cat-calls veered into genuine applause when it was seen that the cripples were putting up a fight. For young Hunt had the legs of the opposition, and adopted kick and rush tactics. He won an astonishing victory by 6–5.

Fielding's knocked out Redmond's in this round, and so removed at once the most serious obstacle in their path to the cup. Smith's succumbed to Bates', Paterson's to Hayter's, and Jones drew the bye.

And now a big slice of luck came to young Hunt's cripples. In the next round the bye fell to them. Fielding's vindicated form by

accounting with some ease for Bates'; Jones' beat Hayter's after a hard fight.

"Fielding's got the cup in his pocket!" agreed Bellgrove.

When he had drawn the bye in the third round young Hunt began to talk less (to his chums) about his cripples, and more (to his cripples) about tactics. Four of them he coached secretly, and (again secretly) sent them into training. Judson he left alone. Nothing could be done with such a hopeless case.

"It's a farce!" said Bellgrove. "The rabbits have walked straight into the final!"

As, of course, they had. Jones and Fielding were left to fight out the semi-final. Fielding's won a fine game.

"I guess we'll christen that cup—properly!" laughed Fielding.

———

CHAPTER III

At last there came the great day. Twelve minds, at least, found it hard to concentrate upon their books that morning. They gave it up, no doubt, as a bad job. And no doubt, too, that the masters to whom these sundry individuals were assigned made allowance for their mental aberration. Only once in your lifetime are you likely to attain the final of the sixes.

To remark that the London papers do not reach Bellgrove until midday may appear a digression. What have the London papers to do with our story? As a matter of fact they have considerably to do with it. But they had nothing to do with Fielding. Nor with any of the boys.

Shortly before twelve o'clock these papers are brought up the hill by the newsagent's boy, and by him placed on a table set apart for them in a small corridor immediately outside the door giving on to the Head's quarters. Presently they are retrieved from this table by a maid, and borne to the masters' common room. If you are very anxious to learn the morning news, and sneak out of school on some pretence at five minutes to twelve precisely, you may steal a peep at the papers before they are removed. But you take your own risk, for the corridor is "out of bounds."

Moreover, if there is one little crime which annoys the Man of Bellgrove beyond all others, it is this surreptitious raiding of the papers. He objects to your presence in the corridor at all times. He objects exceedingly if you are caught reading the masters' papers there.

Fielding, always eager for the football news from London, very often found a good excuse for slipping out of class at twelve o'clock. More than once he had been discovered at the papers. "The next time——" the Head had said, and paused significantly.

For third hour on the morning of the final the Man was taking the Sixth in their class-room. But at half-past eleven he rose, and, bidding them behave till he returned, he left them. He went to his own quarters.

Unhappily, Fielding did not know this. At ten minutes to twelve he eyed the clock in the Fifth room, and reflected that the Man was shut up safely in the room across the passage. Fielding's nose began to bleed. He obtained permission to depart and attend to it.

Minutes now became important.

At twelve o'clock Judson had occasion to go to the Head's study for a book. Passing the corridor he observed a very familiar figure with its back to him, reading a newspaper. He passed on. The table, it may be remarked, stands at the furthest end of the corridor some twenty yards from the Head's door.

At six minutes past twelve the Head returned to his class-room. At seven minutes past twelve Fielding took his place in school again. His nose had ceased to bleed.

At fifteen minutes past twelve books were shut up and all the forms filed into Big School, as is the custom on half-holidays, for the issue of any general orders of the day.

It is quite unusual, however, for the Man to ascend the dais on these occasions, and Bellgrove wondered when they marked him standing there that morning. His brow was black.

"Fielding!" he called, icily. "Fielding!"

Fielding stood out.

"Did I see you reading the masters' papers just now?"

"No, sir."

"Oh!" gasped the Head, and departed.

There was, you see, nothing more that he could say. At Bellgrove your word is invariably taken.

Ten minutes later Fielding was standing before Judson in his study. The captain had summoned him.

"I saw you reading that paper. I saw you with my own eyes, Fielding," he began, quietly. "I made a note to haul you for it; but I had no intention of reporting you."

"Oh," said Fielding, "did you? Well, lots of the chaps sneak out, and do the same."

"Yes; but they don't lie about it."

Fielding mumbled something about "Silly rot."

"You must go straight off to the Man,

Fielding, and tell him you lied. Straight away now, please!"

"If I do," growled Fielding, with a face as black as thunder, "he'll stop me playing this afternoon!"

Judson had forgotten the sixes—for the moment.

"Why should he?" he said.

"Because he'll twig that'll hit me most. He knows I'm keen on that cup. I wouldn't have lied otherwise."

Recalling the Man's characteristic methods of punishment, Judson admitted that nothing was more likely. The Man would exact the severest penalty for that lie. Short of expulsion he could not punish Fielding more acutely than by removal from the sixes.

"I'm sorry," said Judson, very slowly, "but it can't be helped. You must go at once."

But Fielding's wits were battling hard. He tried another tack.

"If you get me stopped playing—just for reading the rotten papers," he said, "the chaps'll say that you did it to win the sixes yourself. You've a chance of winning—with me out of the way."

"I'm sorry," said Judson, simply.

"You'd do anything to collar the cup. This proves it. And I can prove it further. Why can't I go later, after the tie?"

"I was just thinking of that," said Judson, in cheerless tones. "But it won't do. You've disgraced us all by telling a lie. It's my duty, my plain duty, to see you put it right at once—at once, Fielding. Otherwise I'm condoning it *pro tem.*"

"Rot!" sneered Fielding.

Judson felt honestly miserable. He wished

"I'm not going in goal," said Judson, grimly. "This is the day I've been waiting for all my life."

Fielding to play in the final, on the grounds of common fairness, and for certain reasons of his own. To postpone the tie would be an endeavour to outreach the Head—the astute Man would never suffer that. He felt quite certain that if Fielding went straight off to the Head, Fielding would never play against him in the sixes. He felt equally certain that his duty required him to send Fielding straight away. Nothing else was consistent with the honour of his office.

"I'm sorry," he repeated. "I'm beastly sorry, Fielding; but you *must* go at once."

"Look here—I'll go to-night," pleaded Fielding.

"And when the Man knows that I've allowed you to put it off, just so that you may out-manœuvre him, what will he think of me, Fielding? He'll think I'm a nice sort of a captain for Bellgrove, won't he?"

"The Man needn't know that, Judson."

"He must," said Judson, quietly.

Judson moved to the window, where he stood thinking for a space. Fielding, with hope beating in his heart, watched him, and said nothing. Suddenly the captain wheeled round.

"Look here, Fielding, for the sake of the sixes you needn't go till after chapel to-night."

"I say, you're awfully——"

"Oh, get out, and don't thank me, man!"

"But if the Man asks why——"

"I'll take the responsibility for that," said Judson. "And pay the price," he murmured, as the door closed on the other. "I'll pay—I'll have to pay. But I'm hanged if it isn't worth it!"

What was the price—and what was worth it? Both are Judson's secret for the moment.

Hayter found his chum in fine spirits as he walked on to the field.

"You can't dream you're going to win?" said Hayter.

"I don't think we've got a ghost, old man. But, between you and me, this is a day I've been waiting all my life for."

"You'll be jolly cold in goal, Jud."

"I'm not going in goal," said Judson, grimly.

This astonished Hayter, but it astonished Hunt Minor considerably more.

"But—I say, Judson!" he protested. "I say——"

Judson cut him short.

"I'll be more use to you at full-back," he said, with a little of the stiffness of his tones of office. Young Hunt recognised the tone.

Fielding played two forwards, two halves, a full-back, and a goal-keeper. Young Hunt started with himself at centre-forward, a wing on either side, lying well out, one half-back, a goal-keeper, and Judson. Bellgrove stared when it saw its captain at full-back.

"Young Hunt's dotty!" it agreed. "But what's it matter? It's a gift for Fielding's!"

Fielding himself had never any doubt of the result; the only danger he apprehended was that constituted by young Hunt, whose speed and pluck had carried his crocks to a victory so dramatic in the first round. But he was quite capable of "bottling" young Hunt, and set himself to do so, ready at the same time to dribble through "on his own" whenever he saw the opportunity. He could scarcely take seriously the cripple on each of his enemy's wings.

Nor could the crowd. When young Hunt trapped the ball, and, instead of kicking over Fielding's head swung it out at once to Mulberry on the line, the school shrieked at that anxious youth. "Sprint her down, Mul!" they screamed; with a yell that frightened him out of his wits. He had no experience of playing before a gallery. He stumbled, and fell on all-fours upon the ball. "Hands!" claimed Wells from full-back, and ran up as the whistle blew. Without a second's waste Wells took the kick, and sent the ball hard up the field to Judson. Fielding had been ready for the move, and he sprinted after.

The ball was soaring high, Fielding was following up at a tremendous pace, and Judson had little time. He must either take it on the volley or full pitch, or must trap it coolly, evading at the same time Fielding's charge. He had no fellow back to come to his assistance.

On came Fielding as the ball was dropping. Bellgrove watched in astonishment—the crock was taking it so calmly. With Fielding on him up went Judson's foot to meet the ball as it dropped, to tap it over the other's shoulder. Before Fielding could turn Judson had it again; but he didn't kick wildly, as the onlookers expected.

"Oh, played, sir!" they cried, and watched Judson dribbling down—was this the man who never played?—and next, as the other half met him, pass quietly to young Hunt. And now was young Hunt's chance. The enemy's defence was drawn, the great Fielding was behind him, in front Wells only and the goal-keeper. If young Hunt could pass Wells the goalie would have little chance.

Very coolly Judson dropped back again; young Hunt dashed forward with the ball. In

a flash he rounded Wells; out came the goal-keeper, his heart thumping. A moment while Hunt steadied himself, and then—into the net sped the ball.

"But, by gum, it was Jud's goal!" cried Hayter, when the applause was dying down.

As they came back to centre his skipper shot a quick glance of delight at Judson; Fielding looked a little puzzled.

CHAPTER IV

PLAY in footer sixes is mainly individual, and for the next fifteen minutes this game resolved itself into a struggle between Fielding himself on the one hand, and young Hunt's cripples on the other. Mulberry was nervous; Broughton on the other wing always kicked too hard, and Tippett, half-back in front of Judson, never kicked at all. Most of his time he spent upon the ground. Fielding, grimly bent on vengeance, seemed everywhere; now on one wing, now on the other; now pulling up young Hunt; now taking long shots over Judson's head. Two of these skimmed the bar, and once at close quarters Fielding almost broke it; at last, when he had sent the school captain sprawling with a fine, fair charge, he dribbled into the corner of the net.

"It's all over now," said Redmond.

"Rather!" cried Bates. "Fielding's got their measure."

"Buckets!" snapped Hayter, while they wondered what he meant.

But Fielding didn't score again before half-time, although he came perilously near it, and kept the play almost entirely in young Hunt's quarters. And when the whistle blew Fielding was feeling baked.

In this respect Fielding's were to pay the price of over-confidence. With such a soft job before them in the final they had neglected to get themselves into condition. It hadn't seemed worth it—for a walk-over. Fielding himself had done thoroughly well at dinner; and so had his five heroes. But the cripples, with Hunt Minor's eye upon them, had eaten sparingly.

"How do you feel?" inquired young Hunt of Judson. Young Hunt spoke with a new accent of respect.

"Fit for another hour of it," said Judson, quietly.

Judson did not want to waste this breathing time in chattering; he wished to think. He hadn't worsted Fielding yet, he told himself; and to worst Fielding was his ambition. To worst Fielding, he remembered, he had betrayed his trust as captain of the school. To private ambition he had sacrificed his duty.

"But I'll pay for it," he was repeating, as he took his place again. "Oh, yes, I'll pay for it!"

As the sides lined up it was observed that young Hunt's had changed the disposition of their forces. Mulberry and Tippett had been sent to back, young Hunt and Judson were forward, Broughton was lying behind them; Jenkins Minor stood proudly in his place between the posts, the cynosure of a rapidly increasing circle of his chums. Jenkins Minor had done nobly, and deserved their worship.

Judson had told Hayter that he'd "got an idea" of half-back play; and now Bellgrove began to learn that Judson *had*. They saw him tackling Fielding himself and robbing him. They saw his slim, light figure darting in and out of *mêlées*, evading charges, and always on the ball. They saw him dribble round an enemy, and pass to young Hunt, not by a dig with his toe, as Bates pointed out, but neatly, with the side of his foot, just as Fielding himself did. Presently they saw him break right through and score!

Fielding's grew flurried. The cup had been at their lips; this rabbit, who never played footer, was dashing it away!

Thanks to Judson, young Hunt was getting more of the ball now, and the pace became furious. For Judson would rush out to the wing, and the defence realised the peril of leaving him unmarked. But all their attention was needed for young Hunt.

"Dash the fellows!" muttered Fielding, and kept dropping further back himself. This drew some of his teeth as an attacking force, and Fielding's breath was coming in great gasps.

To a man now Bellgrove was cheering Judson. The eyes of all were opened, until they could all but see the buckets coming up from that well of courage. The dark horse, who would not risk his influence by figuring on Small Side, was making hacks of the field. Fielding could have mastered young Hunt alone, but even Fielding could not master both of them; and the rest of Fielding's six were too blown—at last—to do anything but kick spasmodically.

"Now!" cried Judson. "Sling her out!"

And out young Hunt slung "her." Down the wing he went, and as Fielding met him he feinted to pass back to centre. But it was only a feint, Judson slipped round, and as Fielding came at him again he passed truly to his captain.

Round again spun the harassed Fielding, but too late to recover. Young Hunt shot the third goal—and the referee whistled for time.

The cripples had won home by three to one!

The astonishment of Bellgrove was lost in admiration of their captain's play. At tea all Bellgrove was regarding Judson with stricken reverence. But once again they remarked how silently he sat.

But they would have been more dumbfounded had they been able to accompany him into the Head's study after chapel.

"Yes, Judson, what is it?" remarked the Head.

"If you please, sir, I wish to resign the captaincy," said Judson.

The Head looked at him, but made no answer.

Judson, very pale, waited.

"Why, Judson?"

"Because, sir, I don't make a good captain."

"Oh!" said the Head, drily. "Opinions differ, Judson."

Judson disregarded the compliment.

"I'd rather resign, sir," he insisted.

"I think that rests with me, Judson," said the Head. "Ah—come in!"

Enter Fielding, dourly determined.

"I told you a lie this morning, sir," he began, before his courage should ebb. "I was reading the paper."

"Oh!" sighed the Head.

"Judson saw me," went on Fielding, with a quick glance at Judson, "and told me to come and own up at once."

"And why didn't you, Fielding?"

"Because, sir, I wanted to play in the sixes. And because I thought you'd stop me if you knew. And so—and so——" Fielding stopped here, wondering how to put it.

"Then Judson—must have known—you disobeyed," began the Head, puzzled in his turn.

"It wasn't Judson's fault, sir——"

And now Judson interrupted.

"I was keen that Fielding should play in the sixes, sir," he put in quickly. "Keen for my own reasons." The Head smiled, knowing his captain's character better than that youth suspected. "So I temporised. I told him he needn't own up till after the tie. I'm entirely to blame, sir."

"In one respect—only—you were both of you right," said the Head, coldly. "You, Fielding, would certainly not have played had I known. You will be gated for the rest of term—for lying to me, Fielding."

"Yes, sir."

"And for reading the paper you will write me out the second book of Horace. Now go."

Fielding went. Judson was following, but heard himself called back.

"Some mysteries explain themselves, Judson. I understand your resignation now. You were wrong to temporise with falsehood. You must pay for it."

"I meant to, sir," said Judson.

"So I understand. Your resignation is accepted, Judson. I cancel your captaincy. Good night."

Again Judson was at the door.

"Judson!"

"Yes, sir."

"As Bellgrove has no captain at this moment I appoint you to the office. I congratulate you. From what I have observed you should make as good a captain as—er—even your immediate predecessor, Judson. Good night again!" And the Head dismissed him with a smile.

But in the passage waited Fielding. He grabbed the captain's hand.

"I'll want you to play right-half for the team, Jud," said he.

"Thanks," said Judson, simply.

"And get your cap as soon as ever you like."

"Thanks," said Judson.

THE END

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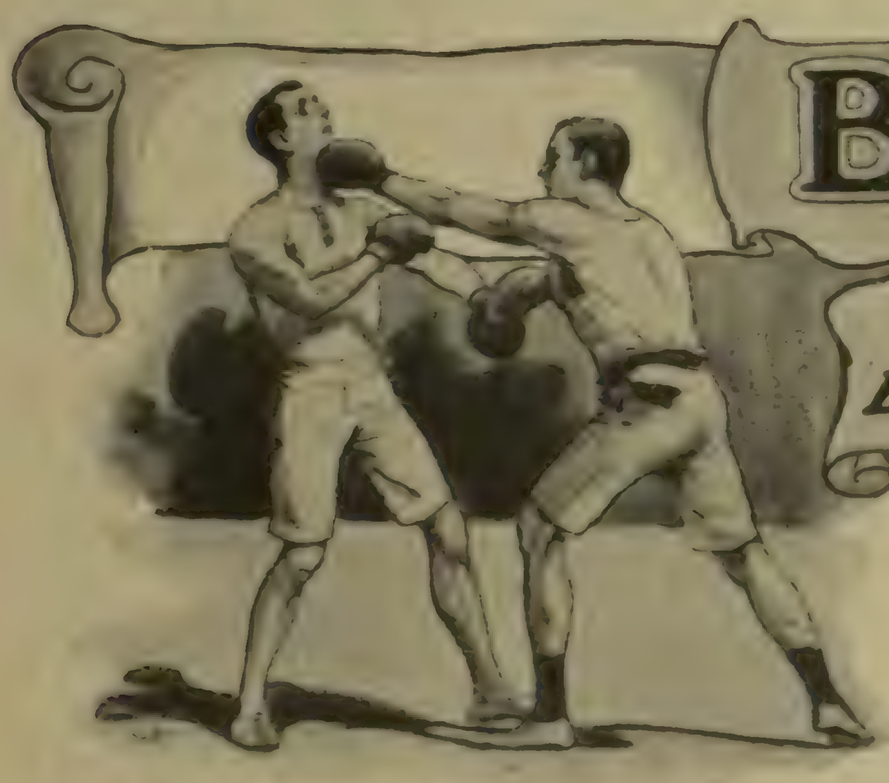


BOXING FOR BOYS

BY A·L·CHAMPNEYS

(Conclusion)

A Splendid New Series of Practical and Instructive Articles by the Famous Heavyweight Champion of Oxford University in 1899, 1900, and 1901

Boxing in Competitions

THOUGH some of my readers will lack the inclination and others the opportunity to box in competitions, I think that some advice on competition boxing, and on the best preparation for it, will be of use to these no less than to those who intend to win championships in the ring, since after all the one aim of a boxer should be, under all circumstances, to do the best he can, whether a championship or mere personal satisfaction is to be the reward.

Competitors in all competitions are classed according to their weight, since it would be obviously unfair for a man or boy weighing 8st. to have to meet one weighing 12st., for each of the latter's punches would have fifty per cent. more power behind it, without making allowance for his probable extra reach and strength, while there is no possible way of handicapping a boxer short of blindfolding him, or tying one hand behind his back.

The usual classification of weights for amateurs is as follows :—

Bantam-weight, 8st. 4lbs. and under
Feather-weight, 9st. and under.
Light-weight, 10st. and under.
Middle-weight, 11st. 4lbs. and under.
Heavy-weight, any weight.

Competitors in the various weights go on the scale in boxing costume but without gloves.

There is always, of course, a great temptation to an intending competitor to make the lowest weight possible. For instance, a boy who normally weighs 10st. 4lbs. prefers to get himself down to 10st. rather than have to give away 14lbs. or thereabouts to a middle-weight. Of course, it very much depends on the individual, and on whether he carries too much flesh ordinarily; but generally speaking, it is a mistake for a boy, especially at an age when he is growing, to attempt to reduce his weight; and almost invariably the result is that he weakens himself in the process. It is generally much more paying at that time of life to build yourself up and thus equalise matters, though the extra weight should be gained by the addition of muscle and not fat.

It seems, however, to be a very general idea among boys that in order to get fit for any sport the essential thing is to reduce weight; and the devotees of this theory never seem to grasp the fact that, in nine cases out of ten, this process involves a reduction of strength. In training for boxing and for everything else it is as bad to take too much out of yourself and to put too little into yourself as it is to do the reverse.

As a matter of fact, boys who play games are generally in fairly good training, and do not want to do a great deal more than usual when preparing for a competition, and it is much better to be always in good condition and only require light work for any special preparation than to be generally out of condition and be compelled on going into training to make a sudden radical change in one's way of living. Competitions for boys are limited to three rounds, and competitors rarely have to go into the ring more than three or four times; and that, with a good rest in between the heats, is not usually a supreme test of endurance.

The Training Required

Consequently the training should not be the same as it would be for a twenty-round contest, and two or three attempts to beat ten seconds over 100yds. will be a better preparation than "Marathon" racing, and a brisk walk of five miles better than a tramp of twenty. Of course, an intending competitor should do a good deal of boxing during his preparation, but should keep to three-round bouts, and should not do more than three of these in the day if he is taking other exercise, as he should, in the open; though a few minutes now and then with a punching-ball is very useful, and so is skipping with a rope. Dumb-bells, except the very lightest, are best avoided. It is important always to choose the best boxers you can get, and as many different ones as you can, to spar with during your training, and it is always a mistake to practise with anyone decidedly inferior to yourself, either in skill or weight, as this tends to make you slow and careless.

With regard to food and drink, the important thing is to have neither, except at regular hours, and then just as much as you really want and not more; and, of course, you should not eat many sweet things. Eating and drinking between meals is really the chief thing to avoid. About four days before the date of the competition it is best to knock off boxing and gradually diminish the rest of your work until the day before, when a gentle walk in the morning and afternoon and plenty of fresh air will be all you will require; while on the day itself quite a short stroll in the morning will be sufficient to freshen you up.

You should not have a heavy meal, of course, immediately before going into the ring, but a cup of Bovril or a raw egg an hour before is often recommended.

Three-Round Bouts

In a three-round bout you have very little time in which to prove your superiority, and it is therefore important that you should begin to do so from the moment you have shaken hands.

If your training has been thoroughly successful you should be able to start off at full speed with the confidence of being able to keep it up until the end of the third round, provided your opponent cannot knock the fight out of you in the meanwhile.

In a twenty-round contest it may pay to let your opponent wear himself out in the first half-dozen rounds at the cost of some points which you will regain later, but in a three-round competition this cannot be done, and therefore the safest plan of campaign is to score at top speed from start to finish; and if you have had plenty of experience over the same course during your time of preparation you will know pretty well how much you can do, and will always be able to avoid the danger of beating yourself by trying to do too much.

There always seems to be a great moral gain, among novices especially, to the boxer who gets home the first good hit; and whether you succeed in doing this or not you must always remember that to be a safe winner in three rounds you must always keep attacking, because competitions are never won simply by not getting hit. I do not, of course, mean that you should simply go for your opponent anyhow and without thought of defence, but the more you can follow him up and carry the war into his camp the more likely you are to get the verdict.

Also, of course, you will probably find it necessary to allow yourself an "easy" now and then in order to recover your strength, but the fewer of these the better in a short bout.

Keep Him Guessing

As to the methods of attack and defence you should use in a competition, these should be dictated mainly by your own proficiency in various particular hits, counters, and so on, and modified according to the tactics of your opponent. As to your own strong points your previous experience will be a sufficient guide; while those of your opponent will have to be recognised as the rounds proceed, and duly taken into account. For instance, supposing your favourite method of attack is a left lead at the head followed by a right at the body, and you find that your opponent can always stop the first hit with a left counter at the head, you must vary your attack; for instance, by ducking as you lead, and following with your left to the body instead of with the right. However, you must not, of course, keep on always repeating the same means of attack and defence, or your opponent will quickly find a way of answering them, and the more varied your methods the less he will know what to expect, since in boxing, as in many other matters, to be forewarned is to be forearmed.

It is therefore wise for the learner from the very beginning to make himself proficient in as many ways as possible, since a man with one strong point is obviously at a disadvantage as compared to a man with many. If you have only one, let it be a straight left; but the more you can master the better.

Apart from the methods of yourself and your opponent your tactics must, of course, be largely influenced by the physical differences between you.

On Tactics

Supposing that he is bigger and stronger than you, you must rely on your extra quickness and agility, never letting him get to close quarters and mix things up, but fighting always at long range by clever footwork, and keeping clear of the corners of the ring. If it comes to infighting the heavier man always has the advantage owing to the greater power of his blows. Obviously, if you have the advantage in weight it will be to your interest to get close to your opponent in order that your strength may neutralise any advantage he may possess.

If your opponent is considerably taller and longer in the reach than yourself you will find that he can hit you at long range, while you cannot retaliate, and in these circumstances it will pay you to get near him to neutralise this advantage and play for his body, which you will be able to get at more easily than his head.

Of course, if your opponent has a marked superiority not only in weight and strength but also in height and reach, you will have to depend on your superiority in quickness, skill, and generalship; but it is such excessive physical disparities that the weight classification is designed to counteract.

Whether a boxer's repertory of attack and defence is comprehensive or limited, in order to take the fullest advantage of it he must acquire the faculty of taking a critical and impartial view of the bout as it proceeds, so that he knows pretty well at any moment whether he is ahead or behind; at which points he is being beaten, and at which he can win; how much strength he has in reserve, and how much his opponent has; and, in short, all the circumstances. If he can do this he will recognise when he has to make a spurt and when he can afford to rest, should he need it. He will know when his opponent needs a rest, and will be able to see that he does not get it; he will, in fact, be able to direct his actions as a general directs an army in battle.

The Advice of Your Seconds

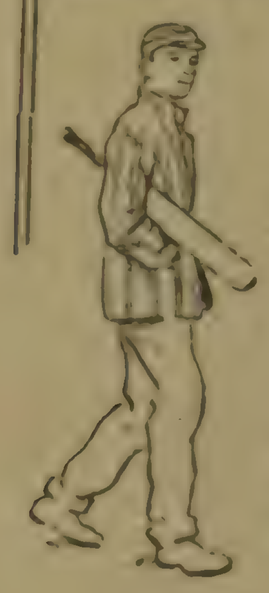
In boxing competitions the principals, of course, get the advice of their seconds in the intervals, but as there are only two intervals in a three-round bout, the boxer who has himself a clear-headed understanding of the state of affairs in the ring from moment to moment during the progress of the rounds, can judge for himself at a critical moment when the advice of his seconds is not available. The value of this faculty, when combined with the ability to decide quickly and wisely on the proper course of action, which ability is, of course, only to be attained by experience, cannot be overestimated.

Though it is a very common thing for amateur bouts to be brought to a conclusion before the three rounds have been fought out by a blow on the jaw or mark, this means of winning should never be sought at the expense of points. That is to say, in a three-round bout it is the most foolish

policy to let your opponent score points and refrain from scoring as fast as possible yourself in order to get in what in three rounds, unless you have already got your man really beaten and at your mercy, or else you are infinitely superior to him, must always be considered a lucky blow. The point of the jaw and the mark are easy to protect, and further, in the case of the latter, if your opponent is not deficient in abdominal muscles he will probably not be badly "winded" by a blow there unless it takes him entirely unawares. If he sees the blow coming, even at the last moment, when it is too late to guard, the involuntary contraction of these muscles protects what is otherwise a very vulnerable spot. Consequently, as has been said, barring a very great inequality of strength or skill, or unless your opponent is so beat as to be practically unable to defend himself, the chances are always against a three-round bout being prematurely finished by these means. It is only because in competitions the boxers are naturally often very much more unevenly paired than in matches, where the adversaries are selected for their comparative equality, that so many speedy endings occur; but to sacrifice points and take risks with a view to such a conclusion is the height of folly. If the opportunity comes, take it by all means, but the obvious and avowed "knock-out" hunting, at the expense of everything else, that is sometimes seen is always detrimental to good boxing, and in three-round bouts a thoroughly bad speculation, except for a man so hopelessly outclassed that he has no other chance of winning; and for him the chance is indeed infinitesimal.

A very great deal more, of course, might be written on the subject of boxing than is possible in the space at my disposal. There are, of course, other methods of attack and defence than those described, other considerations as to tactics in the ring, and other faults than those here branded which must be avoided; but in this and the foregoing articles my readers will find the subject dealt with sufficiently exhaustively, certainly for beginners and, I think, for those, too, who are well past that stage. In conclusion I hope that what I have written will help some of them to win championships, and those who do not aim at prizes to attain at any rate proficiency.

The End



Competition for March

FIRST PRIZE in each Class:

A SPLENDID CRICKET BAT

(Made by the well-known firm of Messrs. FRANK SUGG, Ltd.).

SECOND PRIZE in each Class:

GOODS TO THE VALUE OF HALF-A-GUINEA.

Winners of the Second Prizes may choose what they wish from the goods illustrated on Advert. page x.

And Fifty Consolation Prizes!

If you look through the titles of the stories and articles that appear in this number of The Captain you will find that you can compose from them, with the aid of one or two other words, quite a number of sensible sentences. Here is an example of such a sentence:—

> *Black Evans* having lowered *Judson's Colours* in the *Boxing for Boys Competition for March*, had next to meet *The Substitute* for *The Lost Explorer*, who had probably been *The Tiger's Prey* while he was taking *The Only Chance* to teach *The Stamp Collector How to Encourage Birds to Nest*.

This is by no means the best sentence that can be composed in this way, and we want Captainites this month to use their skill to form better sentences in the manner described. To those readers who forward the best attempts we will award the splendid prizes announced above.

A competitor may have more than one attempt if he wishes, but each attempt must be accompanied by the Competition Coupon which appears on the Prizes Page (Advertisement page x). There are two classes:—

Class I.—No age limit.

Class II.—Fifteen years of age and under.

The Competition Editor's decision and awards must be accepted as final.

All entries must be received not later than Monday, March 18th, and envelopes should be addressed "Jumble Sentence Competition," The Captain, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.

Special prizes will be awarded to Foreign and Colonial competitors, whose attempts must arrive not later than May 18th, 1912.

BLACK EVANS

By R. S. Warren Bell.

Author of "Tales of Greyhouse," "J. O. Jones," etc.

CHAPTER XXIV

A PAUSE

THE door opened, and King appeared.

"Tell the Head I'm here, will you?" said Evans, shortly.

"I've told him, sir; and he said would you kindly go to your class-room until he sends for you? For the moment he is engaged."

Evans turned and walked slowly away. In the Lower Fifth room he found Carson and Dawson working feverishly at a French exercise, for the new age-limits established by Mr. Talbot were coming home very forcibly to fellows of this age. Carson and Dawson had to reach a certain standard of knowledge or get out, and as they didn't want to get out they were trying to reach the standard of knowledge. The change proved an excellent tonic in their case, and in the case of many others of their kidney. On this night, for instance, Carson and Dawson had got leave from their form-master to stay up for an extra half-hour in order to do their French. A year previously they would not have dreamt of putting this extra tax on what they called their brains.

"Hullo," said Carson, who did not take kindly to overtime, "here's Fewlass. Come to join the good boys of Form Five B, Fewlass?"

Evans went to his desk, which was just behind Dawson's, and sat down. The chums looked at one another, and Carson raised his eyebrows in an inquiring way. Dawson nodded. Then Carson jerked his head towards the Welshman, who, with the lid of his desk supported by his head, was searching for something.

"Fewlass," said Dawson, turning round and resting his elbow on Evans's desk, "Percy Carson is devoured by curiosity. He told me just now he saw you going towards the Man's house, and I'm afraid you'll think it rude of him, but he wants to know whether the Man has, really and truly, been putting it about you?"

"Not yet," growled Evans, irritably throwing back the lid of his desk, which met the cranium of Dawson with a horrid sound.

"Here, hang on!" shouted Dawson. "That's my head!"

"Not yet," continued Evans, as Dawson rubbed his scalp painfully, "but I think he has a mind to."

"You think he's going to whack you?" asked Dawson, open-mouthed.

"Either that or he's going to expel me," said Evans, "but I'm not going to wait for either. I'm going!"

The surprise depicted on the faces of the chums would have been comical had not the situation been so serious. For there was stern determination and decision in Evans's deep, level accents. He was going. They knew he was going. He had made up his mind a long time ago that if things came to this point he would go. If he were to be expelled or

"requested," he would not outstay his welcome by a single hour. And a flogging he would never submit to.

Evans had collected some exercise books. He handed them to Dawson.

"I'm sorry I hurt you," he said; "but, you know, you're fond of getting your head closer to things than it ought to be. I leave my novel to you and Carson."

"But, Evans," said Carson, "do you really mean to say that you're going to do a bunk?"

"Indeed, yes," said Evans.

"But where are you going?"

Evans took a brown-paper parcel out of his desk, shut down the lid, and stood up, the parcel under his arm.

"I'm going to take the train to Cardiff," he said, "and raise the money by selling this old great-grandmother of mine." He drew his cap from his pocket and put it on. "And when I get to Cardiff I shall go aboard a ship and be a sailor."

"They'll spot you by that," said Carson, his eyes on the cap's silver crest.

"Pick it off," said Evans, briefly, as he went to the window, and, undoing the patent fastenings, threw it open.

Dawson got up, and gripped Evans by the sleeve.

"Hang on, man," he said, with real anxiety in his tone; "you don't know what the Head wants to see you about, really. Better wait and see."

"I know," said Evans. "There was a governors' meeting to-day."

"But, man, don't be in too much of a hurry," cried Carson, looking very worried; for if it proved that Black Evans were *not* to be expelled or "requested," the mere fact of his going like this on his own account would prove fatal. He would certainly not be asked to return.

Evans held out his hand.

"Good-bye," he said.

"Wait a sec.," muttered Carson, as the firm grip closed on his rather flabby paw. "You mayn't be able to get much on that old picture. My brother sent me five bob to-day——"

Evans released his hand and took Dawson's.

"That's all right," he said, roughly, "I don't want your chink. Jolly good of you, all the same," he added, looking out into the darkness. Then he slid lightly over the window-sill. "I'll write to you chaps," he added, putting his head back into the room.

"Yes, do," replied Dawson, leaning out into the darkness as Evans disappeared.

"Shut the window, man," said Carson, quickly.

Hastily they bolted the window and sat down, each on the top of his desk, bursting with this great secret.

"I believe he's going," said Dawson. "Good old Fewlass! We shall never see a fellow like that here again."

"I don't believe he'll go," said Carson. "He's too good a chap to go like this."

They got to their French again; but they were too excited to write a word, too full of this great secret. They were not boys that the ordinary person, knowing little save what was indifferent about their characters, would have trusted with a secret, and one reason why they thought of the vanished Welshman with a pang of very sincere regret was that he had trusted them. He hadn't asked them not to tell anybody. He had reposed faith in them, and in doing this he could have done them no greater honour.

For some little time there was silence, and then Dawson spoke.

"If it's known he came to this room someone will come along for him. We'd better clear."

They put their books away, turned out the gas, and vanished upstairs. The other fellows in Twenty-four found them strangely silent. But they had reason to be silent, for it was no light thing to see a man they knew so well slide silently away into the darkness, and to know that they would see him no more. And he had trusted them, and that was a very great thing indeed.

* * * * *

There was in Evans the cunning of the wild, and the way of his going through the class-room window to the free world without was swift and silent, and of a kind not to attract notice. He went over grass in preference to gravel, and where there was light he walked in the shadow of trees. And so at length he won into the main road, unobserved by anybody, and, steering a westerly course, ran swiftly down the pavement till he came to the side street in which dwelt Griffiths, tobacconist and barber.

The barber part of Mr. Griffiths' emporium was closed, but the tobacconist's shop was still open. Mr. Griffiths looked rather surprised on observing the Welshman.

"Good evening, sir," he said. "It's going to be a bad night, I'm thinking."

Evans, engrossed in his own affairs, had not

even noticed the slight rain that was falling when he slipped out through the class-room window.

"Dare say," he said, advancing to the counter.

Mr. Griffiths came round the counter, and rather hastily shut and bolted the door.

"It's about time I was closing," he said; "and, indeed, I think it would be as well if I closed now. You will remember, Mr. Evans, what I said about getting the hair-cuts at the college? I haven't got them yet, but they may come to me. There's nothing against me whatever, except you were found here on the first day of term."

"Well, I shan't worry you again," said Evans, "because I'm clearing out."

"Clearing out!" exclaimed Griffiths, as he walked round to his own side of the counter. "And where are you clearing out to?"

"I'm going to Cardiff," said Evans. "I'm going aboard the *Pride of Monmouth*, my uncle's ship. She's in dock now, and won't be sailing for a day or two."

"You've got into trouble?" suggested Griffiths, in his high-pitched voice.

"I've got into trouble," was Evans's surly rejoinder. "And I've come to you for the money that will take me away."

"I'm a bad person to come to for money," returned Mr. Griffiths.

"Yes, I can quite understand that," said Evans. "You'd squeal like a hare in a trap if anybody tried to touch you for a bob. However, I've brought something you'll like." And undoing the parcel he took out the picture of his ancestress. "You said it might be worth a bit of gold. Well, you can have it for a sovereign."

Mr. Griffiths surveyed the picture greedily. Then he stole a sly glance at Evans. He saw his way to a bargain. The boy must have money, and could not afford to haggle. The tradesman could hardly keep the satisfaction out of his face.

"Well, I don't know that this is worth very much," he demurred. "I really ought to show it to a dealer who knows the value of these things."

"Never mind about the dealer," rejoined Evans, roughly. "I want a sovereign for it. I know it's a good thing, because one of the masters told me it was. I dare say you'll get five or even ten pounds for it. All I want is a sovereign."

"Mr. Evans," cried Griffiths, "it's a great risk. It may not be worth anything. It may not be worth half a crown." A bit of gold would be a risky speculation. Yes, indeed."

"You know the thing's worth heaps of money," retorted Evans, furiously. "You'll get your money back all right, and plenty of profit on top. So out with that sovereign!"

"I haven't got a sovereign in the shop," whined Griffiths.

"Quick, man! I must be off."

"You must be reasonable," said Griffiths, as he surveyed the picture lovingly.

"Well, what'll you give me?" demanded Evans. "Come, I've no time to waste bargaining. What'll you give?"

"Give you fifteen shillings," said Griffiths.

"Right! Hand it over."

Reluctantly, David Griffiths counted out the money. It hurt him to pay over this sum for an old, soiled print. However, he handed it over. Evans knew that fifteen shillings would be a good help on his way to Cardiff. If it left him short of the place by twelve miles or so he could soon foot that distance.

No sooner had Griffiths handed over the money than Evans, thrusting it into a trouser pocket, turned towards the door. Griffiths slipped out from behind the counter and unbolted the door.

"It's a great risk," he breathed, as Evans disappeared into the darkness. "Good-bye!" he called after Evans, "if you're really going."

"Good-bye, my man," muttered Evans, as he strode furiously away through the darkness. For he knew that haste was imperative. If he were not found in his class-room there would be a search for him, and he must be well away before that search commenced. For his clothes and books he cared nothing, and, besides, they would be sent on to his home; but there were one or two small possessions in the box-room that he would like to take across the world with him. The door by which the boys gained the box-room was locked, but Evans knew of a window that would serve his purpose. It looked into the head master's garden. It was barred, but one of the bars was loose. All the loose bars at Christ's College were personal friends of the Welshman's. He had been responsible for the loosening of many, and had made use of most of them.

So now it was from the high road to the Head's garden, and that would be pretty safe going, as the Head would certainly not be walking about in his garden at this time, and no other

member of his household was likely to be out there.

There was a wicket-gate leading into the Head's garden from the high road. The Welshman lifted the latch and passed through, and, stepping warily, wound his way round the trees and shrubs that dotted the smooth lawn. The box-room window was right at the other end of the garden, near a vegetable-marrow frame. Evans had some distance to go, and he was accomplishing it unchallenged, when, of a sudden, the clear hail of a voice pulled him up sharp.

One reached the garden from the Head's house by a covered path with walls and roof of frosted glass. The voice came from the doorway of this covered path. And Evans stopped with quickened pulse on noticing that it was a feminine voice.

Should he answer, or should he stay quite still and say nothing? The garden was full of shadows, and he could soon make his escape.

"Who's there?" repeated the voice, sharply.

Had it been Mrs. Talbot or one of the maids Evans would have trusted to his scouting abilities to get away through the shadows, but somehow or other he felt that he must answer. He stepped off the lawn on to the path.

When Cecile Talbot saw that it was one of the boys her eyes grew large with wonder.

"Is that you, Evans Senior?" she said, for she had come to know most of the boys by sight, and many by name, and Evans, of course, she had met before.

"Yes," said Evans.

"What are you doing here?"

"I want to get into the box-room," said Evans.

"But this isn't the way to the box-room," objected the girl.

"It's my way," said Evans.

At first Cecile had been inclined to play the head master's daughter, to assume something of her father's authority, for certainly no boy had any right in the Head's garden, especially at this hour. But the Welshman's characteristic answer took her aback.

She gave a little laugh.

"Oh, it's your way, is it?" she said. "Do you often come this way?"

"No, not often."

He stood there grimly. He was running a great risk by lingering, but somehow he was glad that he had had the opportunity of speaking to Cecile Talbot again, for she was the nicest girl he had ever spoken to.

Cecile had as much curiosity as most members of her sex, and, as regards Evans, perhaps a particular amount.

"I suppose it is something very important?" she said, taking a fearful joy in prolonging the conversation, for she knew that she would get into dreadful trouble if they were discovered.

"Indeed, I want to get just one or two things to take away with me," said Evans.

Why he told her this he could not say; but he felt, as in the case of Carson and Dawson, that he was confiding his secret to safe keeping. And, anyhow, he didn't very much care if he wasn't. No one could stop him from going now he had made up his mind to go.

"Where are you going?" asked Cecile.

"I'm going home," said Evans. "I'm bunking."

"Running away?" said Cecile, with a catch in her breath.

"Yes, that's what it is called." And then he went on, bluntly, "I've got into an awful lot of rows, and I know your pater's been jawing to the governors about me, and so I'm going."

"What shall you do?" asked the girl.

"I'm for the sea," said Evans. "I'm more fitted for that than doing lines and learning French."

Cecile considered the situation for a moment, and then said:—

"I don't see why you should run away. I think you might wait until you are told you can go. The governors are very nice old gentlemen, and I'm sure they wouldn't expel a boy unless he had done something *very* dreadful, and you haven't done anything *very* dreadful, have you?"

Evans gave a short laugh.

"No, I haven't done anything *very* dreadful. I'm a sort of all-round bad character, you know. Sooner or later I shall have to go, and so I've decided that it had better be sooner."

Cecile was looking rather pale. She felt that what she said this boy might mind, when he wouldn't mind anybody else in the school.

"I think," she said, slowly, "that it's a cowardly thing to run away. You ought to see it out, whatever it is. Perhaps you've only got to have a flogging. You're not afraid of that, are you?"

Afraid! The word brought a flush to the Welshman's dark skin.

"No, I'm not afraid," he said, roughly, "but I object. Yes, indeed! No one shall flog me!"

"I think, if I were you," said the girl, "I wouldn't run away. It seems such a poor way of leaving. I think you ought to see it out. A girl at our school was expelled—there's fever in the town, and I can't go back yet—and she went away throwing kisses to the head mistress. She was an awfully plucky girl. She was absolutely afraid of nothing."

"Do you suggest," asked Evans, with a slow smile, "that I should go away throwing kisses to your father?"

She snapped off the involuntary ripple of laughter his question evoked by putting her hand over her lips.

"No, of course not; but you see what I mean? She didn't get out of the window and go down to the station directly she heard she'd got to go. She left by the front door, and went to the station in a cab, properly; and we all loved her because she looked so plucky."

Evans felt quite self-possessed now. Cecile Talbot seemed to understand what he was thinking of as well as what he said, and he had never met a girl before who could do that. He detested most of the scrubby-looking, red-haired girls in his Welsh village. In fact, up to now he had carefully avoided girls as silly, annoying creatures. It was strange, therefore, that one who cared nothing for feminine society, and avoided it with all the adroitness that was natural to him, should be minding what this slim, upright, clean-cut girl of sixteen should be saying. Cecile went to one of the big public schools for girls, and it occurred to Evans that it must be a pretty hefty sort of place if it turned out many girls like this.

She turned her head, listening.

"Someone's coming," she said, in a sharp whisper; "I must go." And she looked at Evans and added, "You won't be a coward, will you?"

Then, without waiting for his answer, she turned and sped lightly away, and at the end of the passage Evans could hear Mrs. Talbot's voice.

In the methods of the wild, of which he was a son, he melted away into the darkness, and became part of the murmuring, rain-spotted mass of bush and hedge at the far side of the garden. Lucky he was so swift and silent, for the next moment there were footsteps in the covered path, and someone came and looked out across the lawn.

Following the hedge, Evans soon reached the gate leading into the road, and, again keeping in the shadows, he sped across the front entrance of the school and towards the Lower Fifth class-room.

Here he met with a check, for the window was fast bolted and the lights were out. He doubled back along to the front entrance, and, taking the chance of being seen, walked boldly in by the main door of the school, flitted down two long corridors to his class-room, and was standing in the doorway when King appeared at the end of the corridor.

"Me?" asked Evans.

"If you please, sir," replied the butler.

CHAPTER XXV

THE RECKONING

"COME in," said the Head, and Evans went in.

"Oh, yes," said the Head; "I wanted to see you, Evans. Sit down there," he added, abruptly, indicating a chair near his desk.

Mr. Talbot knew himself to be a man of intense likes and dislikes, and he knew that he had the greatest possible aversion for this boy. He was almost prepared to acknowledge that. When he put Evans's case before the governors he felt that he had no other course to adopt for the good of the school. The boy must go. It would perhaps be for the boy's good as well as the school's. And then, much to his chagrin, the governors had decided that the boy need not go, that he must be allowed another chance. He had called Evans in with the object of giving him, first, a serious lecture on the subject of his misdeeds, and then a thorough thrashing, to be followed by a warning that if he were guilty of any further insubordination summary expulsion would result. He was a man who did everything promptly, gradual methods not being to his taste; so, although Evans had undoubtedly deserved well of the school this afternoon, the Head did not flinch from carrying out the programme he had drawn up. This night, the night of Evans's triumph, would also be the night of Evans's degradation.

He fidgeted with some papers for a moment or two, and then took up his tale.

"Ever since the beginning of the term, Evans," he said, "you have given me cause for dissatisfaction. On the very first afternoon, you will remember, I found you in a tobacconist's shop. You told me you were getting your razor."

"I was," said Evans.

"How was it that you did not take it home?" inquired the Head. "As it is necessary for you to shave, I presume you shave during the holidays?"

"Griffiths kept it because I owed him money," said Evans.

"Money for what? You will be so good as to answer the question, because I have reason to suppose you were buying tobacco."

But Evans wasn't going to give Griffiths away. So he answered, stubbornly, "I was getting my razor."

"Well, passing over that," said the Head, "I have not been pleased by the attitude you have displayed towards the boys from Page-ways. I am sure, Evans, that you used unnecessary force in that game of Rugby football played at the beginning of the term."

Evans listened to the speech with astonishment. A direct violation of the rules he was prepared to answer for, but for it to be suggested that he had transgressed in this manner fairly staggered him. He certainly

Black Evans, with a quick jerk of his iron wrist, snatched the cane away, and the suddenness of the action caused the Head to reel backwards.

had played rough, but there was no rule against *that*.

"Perhaps I did to-day," he said.

The speech was a shrewd one, and the hit went home.

Evans suddenly found himself feeling quite confident. He saw that he could do no good in the head master's eyes, and that the head

master would be only too pleased to be quit of him, yet for some reason was not able to be.

"You are impertinent, boy!" cried Mr. Talbot.

"I played rough to-day," said Evans, bluntly. "I learnt my Soccer with pros. I felt we were up against it, look you," he went on, with Celtic vehemence, "and I didn't care what I did."

"You played well," the Head admitted, reluctantly. "But I am talking to you about general conduct. The horse-riding episode, for instance."

The head master sat back in his chair, and folded his arms.

"I got five hundred lines for it," said Evans.

"Greek lines," said the head master. "But, Evans, you handed up English ones, and those of a most scurrilous and vulgar description. Not only do you write a crude, illiterate story, in which you use my name in a most libellous manner, but you have the effrontery, sir, to hand this drivel up in place of your imposition."

"It was a mistake," said Evans. "I had the lines in my desk. I got the books mixed up."

"I suppose I must accept your explanation," said the Head, unwillingly. "Still, the fact remains that you have wasted your time writing such insulting trash. A glance would have informed you which were the lines and which the—er—story. But you did not trouble to examine the exercise books. You may say it was a mistake, but as you go through life you will learn that people have to suffer for making mistakes."

Evans listened stolidly. His mood was becoming more cheerful every moment; he had got his back to the wall, and was careless as to what might happen. But it had not occurred to him that the Head's remarks were to be capped and finished by a flogging. From the attitude and tone of the head master he surmised that at the end of the interview he would find himself packing his boxes prior to an immediate departure from the school.

"And then, there are other things. I am informed that you have refused to comply with the football rules, except, apparently, when it suits your mood to do so. So to-day," the head master went on, "I advised the governors that in my opinion the school would benefit by your room rather than your company——"

"I thought so," was Evans's mental comment. "First a jaw, then the sack."

"But the governors took a lenient view of your case. They have decided to give you further time in which to redeem your character, and meanwhile they are of opinion that the best medicine that can be administered to you is a sound thrashing."

And the Head, rising from his chair, proceeded to the fireplace and pressed an electric push in the wall.

King opened the door almost on the instant. The interview was evidently one that interested him.

"Ask Mr. Colles to be so good as to see me for a moment," said the head master.

In a corner of the room stood several canes. The head master went to the corner, took a cane up, tested its pliancy, put it down and picked up another. Had he looked at Evans he might have paused as he went through this pantomime, for the Welshman was hardly the sort of fellow to be intimidated by such a show. Had he looked at Evans he would have seen that the boy's heavy face was set in an ugly fashion, and that in his eyes there burned a curious light.

The Welshman was waiting.

"I am now going to teach you," said the head master, having selected the cane he intended to use, "that a public school such as this school has now become is not a place set apart for idle louts."

Now Evans spoke.

"Indeed," he said, "and what do you intend to do, my man?"

The Head was taken aback for a moment by the impudence of the speech, but recovered himself quickly.

"You will feel what I intend to do in a moment," he said. "As soon, in fact, as Mr. Colles has arrived to hold your hands. Bend over that chair."

With the words he gave the chair in question a flick with his cane.

Evans remained motionless.

"Over that chair at once!" commanded the Head, his colour rising; and, by way of enforcing his order, he gave Evans a sharp cut across the legs.

Evans was wild Welsh, coming of a race that had been wild for many generations. As the cane rose again he seized it. The Head endeavoured to wrench it from him, but Evans, with a subtle jerk of his iron wrist, snatched it away, the suddenness of the action causing the

Head to reel and fall heavily, striking his forehead against the sharp corner of a bookcase. A groan came from him, and he lay still.

At that moment Mr. Colles entered. He stood aghast at the sight.

"Evans, what is this?" he cried. Then he hurried across the room to where his chief lay prone. "Have you hurt him?" he exclaimed, bending over the head master.

The Head was deadly white. He was almost stunned. There was a great bruise on his right temple.

"Boy," repeated Mr. Colles, turning to Evans, "what have you done? Open the window quickly. Call for some water. But, no; wait No one must see him. This must be kept private. Get some water yourself out of the dining-room."

Truth to tell, Evans was feeling not a little alarmed as he watched the Head's closed eyes and mute lips. The hot blood that had surged up with the blow had grown cold again. He hurried into the dining-room, and returned with a glass jug full of water, which Mr. Colles dashed over the Head's face.

Mr. Talbot opened his eyes.

"You're better now?" asked the second master. "Lie still, and you will be all right soon." And he tore the Head's clerical collar from his neck.

There came a knock at the door.

"Don't let anybody in," said Mr. Colles, in a hurried whisper. "No one must see him. I rely on you not to say anything, Evans. Answer the door, but let no one in."

Evans went to the door. It was Miss Fairbrother.

"I wish to see the head master," said the matron, making as if to pass the boy.

But Evans stood stubbornly in her path. "You can't," he said, abruptly. "He's engaged. What is it?"

"I must see him."

"You can't," said Evans, coming out and closing the door behind him. "Tell me what it is. He's ill."

Something in the boy's face told the woman that there existed some very good reason why she couldn't go into the study.

"Tell him," she said, "that all the fields and buildings have been searched thoroughly, and that Pilcher can't be found anywhere."

"Pilcher?"

"Yes; tell the head master that the little boy must have run away. That can be the only explanation of his absence. He cannot be found anywhere. The groundman saw him last, walking alone in the far corner of the football field during the match this afternoon. Oh, listen! What a night for the child to be out in!"

She shuddered, for at that moment the rain was flung with a hiss against the big corridor window by which they were standing.

"He was very miserable," she whispered, "but I didn't think he would do this."

"All right," said Evans, "I'll tell him. Don't come in."

He went into the study, and closed the door behind him. To be sure the agitated matron didn't follow him he locked it. The head master was sitting in a chair, looking white and dazed.

"Pilcher's run away, sir," said the Welshman, to Mr. Colles. "They've searched everywhere for him, and can't find him."

The second master looked startled.

"Run away?" he said. "And on such a night! They've looked everywhere?"

"Everywhere."

The Head, though unnerved, had recovered sufficiently to be able to give the matter his attention.

"We must search the countryside," he said, with difficulty. "Every man in the place must turn out. I will go myself." And rising, he walked feebly towards the door.

"No, sir," said Evans, strangely moved by the man's drawn, white face. "Mr. Colles and I will look after this. Sit down, sir." And with a strong but gentle touch he guided the head master to an easy-chair.

"Do you, Evans," said Mr. Colles, "see that a search is commenced. I must stay with the head master for the moment."

"Trust me, sir," said the Welshman, every atom of his surliness gone, transfigured with the knowledge that the possibility of saving a fellow-being's life had been placed in his hands; repentant, fully conscious of his late crime, an altered being.

He dashed out into the corridor, to find Miss Fairbrother still standing there, frightened and crying.

"Oh, what a night, Evans!" sobbed the matron, as the window by which she stood trembled beneath a buffet of the gale. "It's terrible!"

"Quick," said Evans, "which is his dormitory?"

"Thirty-five," said Miss Fairbrother.

A plan had come into his head, but before he could put it into practice he had to institute the search.

King appeared opportunely. The Welshman grasped the butler's sleeve.

"King, go to the common room and Sixth Form room and say the Head wishes everyone to turn out and look for Pilcher."

"Yes, I'm afraid he's run away," said King.

"No doubt of it," said Evans. "Go on"; and he gave the man-servant a push. Then he himself went up the Head's private staircase three steps at a time.

He dashed through the door leading from the head master's quarters into the school proper, along two corridors, and up a short flight of stairs into dormitory thirty-five.

"Where's Pilcher's bed?" he asked.

"There, that's it," said several voices, pointing to an empty bed in the middle of the long room.

Evans dashed up to it, and seized the nightshirt which lay folded upon the counterpane.

"Anything else of his here?" he demanded.

"Yes," said the boy sleeping next to the new boy, "there's the vest his mother says he must wear at night."

"Happy thought of his mother's," said Evans, grimly, as he snatched up the small garment; and with this and the nightshirt he sped out, leaving the dormitory in a state of wonderment.

He always kept his cap in his pocket, and as he ran downstairs he put it on. He gave no thought to any other protection from the weather; but, hastening to the front entrance of the school, let himself out into the rain. Down the drive he went, turned to the left, and in a few minutes was at Colles' House, traversing the path that led round to the garden. The gate of the trellis-work enclosure was locked. Lifting his foot, Evans smashed it in, and as he did so Harlequin came out of his kennel with a furious growl.

"That's all right, my man," cried the Welshman, as the beast reared up at him. "You know me."

The dog did know him.

Evans unfastened the chain. Then, taking out his handkerchief, he passed it round the dog's collar and tied it. It was a stout piece of cambric, fit for school life.

"Come on, my man," he said; and, holding the great dog by its collar, he went out into the night.

CHAPTER XXVI

WHILE THE STORM RAGED

EDMUND TALBOT was sitting in his chair, with pain and anxiety in his face. On each arm of the chair was stretched a long, white hand, and one hand shook a little. It seemed to him that of a sudden and in a flash things had all come to a head. At the end of the governors' meeting they had seemed so smooth. With the grave and reverend seigneurs approving his policy and commending his innovations, he had gone down to the football match with a light heart, feeling that the worst of this new beginning was now over. He had thought little about Evans; the fact that the boy was to attend in his study that night caused him no apprehension, for, viewing the little world of Christ's College from his lofty position, it had not even entered his mind that a boy could offer open defiance to his head master in his head master's own study—in, so to speak, the throne-room of majesty.

But the unthought-of had happened. He had been defied and physically repulsed. He could not have deemed it possible. The whole episode, together with the disappearance of the little lame boy Pilcher, had for the moment unnerved him. Try as he would, he could not face the position calmly, could not keep his mouth from trembling.

Grieved and very serious, Mr. Colles paced the broad length of the carpet. He realised the seriousness of what had taken place, and he did not know what to advise. For reasons which he could not explain, he entertained some liking, even some respect, for the desperate Welshman. Granted that the man was insubordinate, granted that in the eyes of the school authorities he was a bad egg, yet it was only badness of a certain kind. It was a clean badness. Evans did not belong to the gang of whose existence Mr. Colles was only too well aware, the gang which, thin it out as you would, was for ever spreading its poison, and with its baleful charm luring new adherents within its pernicious circle.

Evans was not of them. Mr. Colles knew enough of the school's inner life to know that. And so, with all his violence and reckless defiance of those set in authority over him, he really stood out as a man of whom the school stood in need.

There was, consequently, very great perplexity in the second master's face as he swung to and fro, back and across the room, while

his chief sat silently in his chair. Suddenly he stopped.

"I think I'll go and join the hunt," he said abruptly.

He had halted by the window, and was gazing out into the stormy blackness, and as he spoke the window shook beneath the fierce onslaught of rain and wind. The huge raindrops smote the glass like a hail of small shot.

"There are plenty already looking," responded the Head. "I would rather you did not go, if you don't mind."

He rose, and walked heavily to the window.

"He may have got into shelter," he muttered.

"He was well away long before the rain started."

It has an eerie sound, thunder in the late autumn; but thunder often sounds later than October. It is sometimes to be heard mumbling over the dark roofs of London in November. It seems strangely out of place, but it is the mark of an abnormal atmosphere. Just now, above the rain and wind, it could be heard muttering.

"It is to be hoped he has found shelter," said Mr. Colles, "though I doubt whether he would trouble about looking for it. The boy is too young and small for a place like this. A boy should be introduced to school life more gradually."

And again he paced the room with restless steps.

"Come," said the Head, rising abruptly, "let us take a walk through the place. Most of the masters and all the prefects are out, so we are practically in charge."

They went out, the Head and his second master, and it occurred to both that this was the first time they had walked through the school in company. They walked slowly and companionably down the long corridors, glancing into the class-rooms as they passed. All was silent. There was no life at all in the great ground floor of the school.

They went into the music-room and gazed through the glass doors upon the darkness enveloping the upper field. The rain was still descending pitilessly.

From the music-room they went by the masters' private staircase up to the first floor, and paced together along the corridor. The news had got abroad of Pilcher's disappearance, and no one was asleep. Corporal Freeman had gone stolidly on his rounds and turned the gas off; but on this occasion it was felt to be safe to relight it after his departure. So, halting in one of the doorways, the sight presented to the Head and Mr. Colles was that of a row of boys sitting up in bed, unwonted excitement in their faces.

As for the boys, they were struck dumb by the sudden appearance of the two masters. Mr. Colles took no dormitory duty, and so was seldom seen above stairs, while the head master was an entire stranger to the dormitories.

The two masters paced down the room.

"Surely it's time you were asleep?" said Mr. Colles. "Long past time for lights out."

But he saw by the bright, wide-open eyes which met him on every side that sleep was not a thing to be thought of yet.

"Please, sir," said a boy, greatly daring, and notwithstanding the presence of the head master, "is he found yet?"

"Not yet," said Mr. Colles, "but they will soon find him. He can't have gone far."

They paced on round the washstands, and presently, reaching the door, went out, but leaving the gas burning at full flare.

There are occasions when the clock of method and order seems to be suddenly arrested, when the most rigid disciplinarian relaxes for the nonce his close grip on routine. Not only in schools, but at many other places in the wide world. And this was one of those times. So the Head and Mr. Colles left the gas burning.

"He must go," muttered the Head, unconsciously voicing his thoughts; "he must go."

Mr. Colles said nothing for the moment, but presently, as they ascended the stairs to the next landing—the stairs worn by generations of scampering feet and much scrubbing—the second master said, very quietly:—

"I wish first you'd let me see what I can do."

"What can you do?" asked the Head.

"I don't know; but I'd like to see what I can do. There's a lot of good in the fellow, I'm sure."

"But the place will never hold him," said the Head. "I am willing to allow that you may have found qualities in him that I've missed, but this place is too small for him."

"Possibly," said Mr. Colles. "Nevertheless, he is a force. Elemental forces acting without restraint do great harm; harness them, and they make splendid servants. He is a fellow who wants to be given something to do which will afford a vent for his energies. If you had an engineering shop here he would astonish you. That type of fellow is at his best when he is grappling with difficult things."

"I dare say," said the Head. "I really don't

know what to do. It's a most puzzling case."

They went into other dormitories. Everywhere, as they entered, a profound hush replaced the babel. It was an event which was long remembered, this quiet pacing of the dormitories by the head master and his first lieutenant.

"Yes, I'm sure of it," said Mr. Colles, as they slowly descended the main staircase; "we can make use of him. And there are others like him. Really, you know, Talbot, when you come to think of it, these age limits must press very unfairly on the elder boys who don't possess the knack of passing examinations. I don't like them! We have undertaken to educate these boys, not throw them upon the world just as they are getting out of the parrot into the understanding stage."

"Yes, there is something in that," said the Head. "There is something in that. I must think over the position carefully."

When they reached the ground floor they found that some of the prefects, drenched through, had returned. One had twisted his ankle, and was limping painfully. They said it seemed a hopeless thing to try to find a fellow on a night like this. They said it took them all their time to find their own way, much less look for anybody else. They had not returned because they had given up; they had been told off to search in a certain direction, and they had made their search, and had no report to make save that their search had been fruitless.

And now a couple of masters appeared, the water streaming from their tweed caps and macintoshes. Still, the main body of searchers had yet to return.

The man only just saved himself by side-stepping into the hedge, and Evans pulled back the dog with all his strength.

The head master was looking very anxious. If this little boy remained out all night exposed to the fierce buffetings of the storm, the worst might happen. A strong boy would suffer, but Pilcher was weak and slight. He was not of the sort that could battle with such weather.

"They have gone in every direction," said

Mr. Colles, "and no doubt by searching so thoroughly they will meet with success."

King was hurrying by when the second master stopped him.

"King, you will see that there's plenty of hot water, because hot baths will be wanted?"

"Yes, sir; I've thought of that," said King promptly.

As the butler went on his way Mr. Colles said, quietly, "A good fellow, that."

"I can't say he has given me entire satisfaction," replied the Head, quite honestly.

"He's a good old servant," insisted Mr. Colles. "He's not here just for his wages. He's as much a part of the school as the bell tower up there."

And the Head remembered what his chief colleague had said.

They went on to the study, and once again found themselves as before—the Head in his arm-chair, Mr. Colles swinging up and down the carpet.

"Yes," said the latter, "I'm sure we can do something with him. And we must have a talk about these age limits, Talbot. I don't want to interfere with your jurisdiction, but I really do know something about these fellows, and I can assure you we are going to lose a lot of good men under the new rule."

A smile flitted across the head master's pale face.

"You talk, Colles, as if the future were of as much interest to you as the past."

"So it is," said Colles.

"I hope, then," said the Head, "you will permit it to interest you to such an extent that you will reconsider your resignation?"

Colles laughed.

"I'll reconsider that, if you like; for, to tell you the truth, I don't feel half old enough yet to retire to a country vicarage."

Someone out in the dark of the drive called to somebody else. There was a grinding of wheels on the gravel, and a plunging of hoofs. Another shout came through the darkness.

"What's this?" exclaimed Colles, throwing open the window. And the Head rose from his chair quickly.

CHAPTER XXVII

OUT AND HOME

AS Evans emerged from Colles' House, holding the hound fast by the collar, he paused to consider his road. His first idea had been to take Harlequin to that part of the football ground where Pilcher had last been seen, but now he reflected that the field was locked against him, and it would take time to procure the key from the groundman. And then, while hesitating, he saw his way plainly.

There are many who scoff at the idea of being influenced by a mysterious force which we cannot explain. But as Evans stood there in the driving rain it flashed upon him with absolute certainty that when the new boy left the school premises an association of ideas connected with getting away from the school would take him along the path which he had traversed on a recent Sunday with Verrey and himself. And, again, he did not know the roads and paths about the school other than this path.

"Come on, laddie," said Evans, passing his hand in a masterful way over the hound's fierce mask. "You and I have got a little job to carry out. We've got to find a little pal of ours. Now, don't be cross," he added, as the dog gave a low growl. "You can keep those manners for other people."

The dog did not, of course, understand the words, but like all dogs he apprehended the tone, and he knew the tone to be that of a master whom he must obey, yet who was desirous of being on good terms with him. He whined, and pushed his nose into Evans's hand.

"That's right," said Evans, and started off, holding the clothes tightly under his coat.

On that Sunday they had only put a mile between themselves and the school when Pilcher had been sent back. This distance Evans covered at a rapid trot, the hound loping evenly by his side. It was very dark, and no easy matter to see where he was going. Keen as the Welshman's eyes were, the hound's were keener, and Harlequin kept rigidly to the path.

Arrived at the place of parting, Evans took the clothes out, and held them down to Harlequin. The hound snuffed them, whining eagerly, and then began to nose about, every now and then growling fretfully, for the moment baffled. But of a sudden he bounded forward with such swiftness that he almost tore the handkerchief out of his master's hand. As it was, Evans lurched and nearly fell.

"Got it?" he cried. "Good dog!"

Harlequin had turned off to the left. He kept on steadily, his nose down to the ground. For a moment Evans stopped him to substitute Pilcher's nightshirt for the handkerchief, this affording him a much more substantial and a much longer leash. Then they went on.

As dog and boy swept round a sharp curve in the road a hoarse ejaculation cut through the night:—

"Who are you? What are you doing?"

The man had only just saved himself from a collision by side-stepping into the hedge. Evans held the hound with both of his strong wrists, and pulled him up.

"Seen a little lad about here?" he asked the fellow.

"Lad? What have I got to do with lads?" growled the stranger. "And who be you, dashing about here with that animal? Like as not you'd have had me over——"

But the rest of his speech was borne away on the wind, as Evans, with a surly laugh, set Harlequin going again.

Buffeted by the storm, the boy and dog flogged on. Harlequin seemed sure of the trail, for he never paused, but panted along in an easy way. Evans didn't think that Pilcher could have got very far; he would be ignorant of his whereabouts, he would be frightened by the darkness, he would be hampered by his lame leg. Evans could picture him running just blindly on without objective, save for the big idea that he was making for Home.

Of a sudden Harlequin stopped and sniffed at an object which lay in the road. The rolling by of a black cloud allowed the moon to shed a fitful glimmer upon the earth, and by this light Evans stooped and picked up the object. It was a Christ's College cap, with the school crest, a shield and buckler, worked on the peak in yellow worsted. The Lower School wore this kind of cap, for the two Fifths had the emblem worked in silver, and the Sixth in gold.

"Good, it's his!" muttered Evans. "Come on, boy!" he roared.

So far it had been road, but now Harlequin wheeled sharply, and came to a stop at a five-barred gate leading to the park of a stately country house. It was a lonely place, this. At the top of an eminence about half a mile from the road grew a cluster of pines which was said to mark an old burial-place. The solitary wayfarers using the path for a short cut home would hurry quickly by this wind-blown clump of trees.

Evans unlatched the gate and entered the park. In fancy he could behold Pilcher footing it painfully across this lonely expanse. Harlequin loped on. Evans, his black hair hanging now in wet streaks over his forehead, his cap long since plucked from his head and hurled away by the wind, clung grimly to the leash. This wild rush through the rain stirred his Celtic blood. A thirst for hardy adventure ran in his veins. Only externally did he come of an educated and civilised stock. In his heart he was a marauding mountaineer, quick to give or take a blow, a lover of the open and the wild.

They raced on past the old burial-place, and entered a gloomy avenue of trees leading down the hill. Still the dog loped steadily on, following the scent with unfailing ease. Already they were three miles from the school.

Had Pilcher asked the way? He had gone on so steadily that he must have had some destination in view. The dog had no need to cast about for the scent. It was straight and easy.

The avenue had protected them from the rain, but as they emerged from it they met the full force of the storm. The rain had increased to a downpour. The water was rolling down the Welshman's neck; he was soaked through, his boots were sodden, his collar was just a bit of rag lying round his neck. The mud had splashed up and blackened his face. But for all this he cared nothing. What disturbed him a little was finding Harlequin harder to hold in. His iron muscles were beginning to give out at last.

At length they reached the other side of the wide park, and now it was through the gate and out into the lane, away to the right, and then to the left, at a killing pace—for Harlequin was quickening. Now the shriek of a whistle told the tracker that the railway was not far off. Almost at the same moment Harlequin climbed a steep bank, and went along a low hedge with Evans crashing after him. They fled across a bleak meadow, and, reaching the other side, found a deep cutting yawning beneath them, through which ran the railway.

"Steady, old man, now," panted Evans. "Are we right? What did he want here?"

But the hound was pulling on its collar. They groped through the railings in the dim gloom, and pursued a narrow footpath, made by platelayers, down the incline.

Following the path they reached the line; but the path continued along the grass by the side of the track. Then Evans saw a light. A mile ahead lay the first station on the way to Jesseville after one left Abbotleigh.

"Meant to take the train," he muttered. "Wonder where he got the money! Come on, doggie!"

There was no need to encourage Harlequin.

His nose down, he pressed on, the Welshman panting alongside him. So there had been method in the miserable little boy's madness! Some instinct must have taken him across the open country to the line. However, he was bound to be collared before he got very far. A little boy, wet through, with no ticket or luggage, is not the sort of traveller to escape observation. So, thought Evans, he might have saved himself this run, and spared his old suit, such as it was. Evans wondered ruefully what it would look like when it was dried out. Still, it was worth it. Pilcher somehow appealed to him, probably because he was so small and weak. Indeed, the idea of Pilcher being out on this night, shivering, weeping, and frightened —it made him shudder.

A last bound, and the bloodhound pulled up short, sniffing hard and whining with satisfaction. They had reached a high brick railway arch. Here, right in the centre, it was comparatively dry; and here, nestled up against the towering wall, was Pilcher, a draggled, forlorn heap. He was lying in a stupor, and did not notice either the dog or his schoolfellow.

"Hi, my man!" cried Evans, shaking him. "Hi, Pilcher!"

The small figure stirred, as if protestingly.

"All right," said Pilcher's voice, "I swear I won't sneak. Only don't kick me any more."

"Sneak!" cried the Welshman, with a curious lump in his throat. "What's the matter?" And his blood ran cold. "Poor little kid! He's wandering."

He put his hand on the bloodhound's broad forehead.

"He's off his head," muttered the Welshman. "Come on; let's get him home."

He picked up the wet little form, and strode along in the direction of the station, which was only a few hundred yards off. Already in the distance Evans could see the head-lights of a train. Harlequin followed with the utmost docility; he seemed to understand the whole business thoroughly.

So laden, Evans struggled up on to the platform. The one porter, a gaping country youth, came forward to intercept him.

"Hi, that's not the way in! Why don't you come in by the proper way?"

Evans almost laughed. The porter was his red-necked antagonist of that Sunday encounter.

"What have you got theer?" demanded the yokel.

"I've got a boy here," said Evans, "and I'm going to take him to Abbotleigh by this train."

"Got yer ticket?"

"Pay at the other end," said Evans, and at that moment the train rumbled in.

Taking Pilcher up, the Welshman snatched open the door of a first-class compartment—any class served in his hurry—and laid his burden on the seat.

The porter, who had recognised Evans, was obstinate. "Ticket!" he said. "And where's the dog's ticket?"

For Harlequin had clambered into the carriage after his master.

The porter hung round the door of the compartment repeating his demand, and, as the train began to move, laid his hand roughly on Evans's arm.

"That's for the three of us," said Evans, and with the words he hit the red-necked man full between the eyes, and sent him reeling back against the door of the waiting-room. Before the porter had recovered himself the train was out of the station.

The journey was a brief one, but it seemed to Evans all too long. Pilcher lay motionless on the seat, Evans chafing his hands and rubbing his limbs, while Harlequin crouched on the floor with his huge mask between his paws.

Abbotleigh at last! Evans tore open the door and shouldered his burden.

"Got him? Oh, good man! Good man, Evans!"

The Welshman started. It was Norman, who had gone with the party told off to search the town and its environments. It had occurred to the alert-minded Pagan that it would be as well to keep an eye on the station.

"The dog found him," said Evans, briefly. "Is there a cab?"

"Believe there is. I'll see." And Norman rushed off.

And there did happen to be one crazy old yellow-wheeled fly outside the station. The driver, huddled on the box with the rain coursing down his waterproof cape, awoke slowly from his doze as Norman hailed him.

Norman rushed back.

"Come on! There is a cab."

Evans staggered beneath Pilcher's dead weight, for the Welshman was tired and stiff from his run, and his soaked clothes clogged his movements. Norman seized Pilcher and hurried out of the station with him. The porter at the gate, staring open-mouthed at Pilcher, forgot to ask for the tickets.

Norman got in with Pilcher, Evans following and dragging Harlequin with him.

"The school, sharp as you can!" And the crazy vehicle moved off.

"My word, Evans, this is splendid!" said Norman. "What an idea!"

Evans said nothing. His eyelids were drooping. Now that the excitement of the hunt was over he felt dreadfully tired. He felt he would like to roll to the floor of the cab and go to sleep.

"Keep awake, man," said Norman, kindly. "You must get those togs off, you know."

The cab toiled up the hill, and it seemed a weary time getting home. But at last—at last!—it stopped and wheeled in at the big gates.

As the cabman whipped up his old steed for a final effort those in the cab heard a shout, and then, through the rain-spattered windows, saw figures.

The cab was pulled up, one of the doors was opened, and Colebrooke's familiar face appeared.

"Good men!" he cried.

"Evans got him," said Norman. "Here you are, Evans," as he handed the small boy to the Welshman. And he slipped out of the other side of the cab.

Even at this moment Evans recognised the generosity of the act. To the Welshman belonged the glory of this night; Norman was rushing indoors with the news.

Colles' voice sounded.

"Bring him in here," it cried; and a friendly warmth shone from the Head's front door.

Evans staggered up the steps with his limp burden.

"Here!" cried Colles, and Evans, obeying the direction, bore Pilcher into the Head's study, Harlequin stalking after him.

"I'll fetch Miss Fairbrother," said Colles, hastening out. "We must get the doctor, too," he added, with an anxious glance at Pilcher's flushed face.

The hound, pleased to find itself in such comfortable quarters, lay down by the fire.

First flinging a rug over Pilcher, whom Evans had deposited in an easy-chair, the head master turned to Evans.

The water was dripping off the Welshman on to the heavy pile carpet. Evans brushed his soaked hair from his forehead as he spoke:—

"I am sorry I hurt you, sir," he said.

"You did hurt me, Evans," said the Head. "But I think I had hurt you before," he added, quietly.

Evans moved up to Harlequin, and stooped down to pat the great dog's head.

"No one will know what happened to-night," went on the Head, "unless you tell them." He laid his hand on the boy's shoulder. "As for you and me, we shall begin again."

Could this be—wondered Evans—the head master he had hated, whose tongue had been like a whip? This man who had suffered by his violence had forgiven him!

Without a word Evans took the hand which the head master had extended to him.

"They call me the Man," said the head master, a slight smile creeping over his white face, "and I want to live up to my name."

THE END.

CONQUERING CLAYBURY

is the title of our new School Serial, which will commence in next month's CAPTAIN.

CONQUERING CLAYBURY

has been specially written for THE CAPTAIN by GUNBY HADATH, and is a public school story of exceptional interest.

CONQUERING CLAYBURY

will certainly prove to be one of the most popular serials THE CAPTAIN has ever published, and to avoid disappointment you should place your order for the April number with your newsagent to-day.

PEEPS AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

RADLEY

The Pond, Radley.

THE new boy arriving at Radley often finds himself at first unwittingly violating its traditions.

He must not walk about arm-in-arm, an honour allowed only to the "bloods." He must not cross the squash court in front of clock tower, a privilege of the prefects and those walking with them. It is "side" for him to wear a buttonhole till he has been there over a year.

In dress he must conform to the regulation dark blue or black suit and ties, and black boots or shoes. For his first year he must wear Eton collars, afterwards he may wear plain stick-ups; butterflies, ups and downs, grey bags, and brown boots being the privilege of the prefects, first caps, and school representatives in boxing, gym., racquets, and fives. For games all must wear grey shorts, blue shorts being reserved for first football caps, and white for other school representatives.

For his first fortnight the new boy is exempt from all fagging. Afterwards he has to fag for prefects, first caps, and the sixth. His duties consist generally in washing up tea-things, cleaning out studies, and fagging tennis balls in summer. Each prefect has two fags, and they are exempt from all fagging except for him, having to boil his kettle for tea, get his milk, and other such sundry jobs.

In the winter term during the first week there is a football match for all new boys who have come since last football term. They are then placed in games according to their ability, and if any good, probably play for their junior social eleven. In summer the new boy has his choice of playing cricket or rowing. If he becomes a "wet bob," he has to pass the swimming test either in the baths at Oxford or in the river. To pass he must be able to swim 100yds. in boating clothes. No one is allowed to go on the river or bathe in the passed bathing place till he has passed the test. During the winter term some new boys join the boat club, though the majority play "footer." In any case, all wet bobs have to come up at half term, except a privileged few, and do not go down again till the middle of the Easter term.

Junior social matches are played on the League system, the senior on the knock-out.

At the end of the summer term there are "social fours," and there is usually keen rivalry to become head of the river in both senior and junior divisions. The races are bumping races after the manner of the races at Oxford.

The end of the Easter term is given up to training for the sports, which generally take place the last week of the term, and there is much speculation as to who will be *victor ludorum*. Just before training for the sports begins, social runs are held. There are two runs for the seniors and two for the juniors. The social scoring the highest total wins the cup and keeps it till next year.

When it freezes, as it usually does for a day or two during the Easter term, there is skating on the pond. Though it seldom freezes enough for the whole school to enjoy it, the prefects and first caps nearly always get some skating.

The corps, despite its recent birth, has an excellent standard; every member of the school is obliged to join, unless he be under height.

The great event of the summer term is Henley, where the eight compete annually for the Ladies' Plate. The whole school go to Henley to cheer on their crew, and thoroughly enjoy themselves. Towards the end of the summer term the match with Bradfield is played. And in winter Bradfield and Malvern are both met in football. Bradfield is met also in fives, and Malvern in racquets.

Gaudy day is the great social event of the year, when all the parents come down and there are speeches, prize-giving, and a concert or some other entertainment. Next in importance comes All Saints' Day, when a Greek or Latin play is performed in the gym.

The school is divided into socials, and all boys when they first come are placed under a social master, from whom they get leaves, orders for books, and other sundries. On Sunday evenings after tea all the socials go to their social master's room, where they read or write. Each social contains about thirty-four boys. Of the eight socials five are in college, two are in houses separated from the main buildings, and one in a house joined to college on one side by a passage.

ALUMNUS RADLIENSIS.

The Editor offers a Prize of One Guinea each month to the Captainite sending in the best description of the life at his school, on lines similar to the above article. Photographs should be sent when possible. Articles not to exceed 700 words in length.

SOUTHAMPTON STREET,
– . STRAND, LONDON.

The volume which closes with this number has, I think all Captainites will agree with me, fulfilled the promises I made for it in my editorial of last September. I foreshadowed then that Mr. Warren Bell's "Black Evans" would prove a school serial worthy to take its place in the front rank of CAPTAIN stories, and I know by the many letters from readers full of praise and enthusiasm for this fine portrayal of school life that my entire confidence in it was justified. In like manner I felt sure that Mr. John Mackie would still further increase his reputation as a leading writer of adventure stories with his splendid tale of the Australian bush, and the literary efforts of these two old and trusted CAPTAIN favourites has resulted in still further widening the ever-growing influence of this magazine. The time has now come to bid adieu to the heroes of these tales, and I would like to say a few words in introducing you to the authors of the serials which will run through the twenty-seventh volume of THE CAPTAIN.

Mr. Gunby Hadath is already well known to Captainites by reason of many excellent short stories which have appeared during the last year or so. Mr. Hadath is never so entertaining as when he is talking or writing about sport, and as a man who has won many honours on the field of play he speaks with knowledge and authority. A man of many parts is Gunby Hadath, "a good all-rounder." The son of a Lincolnshire clergyman, he was educated at St. Edmund's, Canterbury, where he followed in the footsteps of that great cricketer, W. N. Roe, of Cambridge and Somerset, who for years held the world's record for the highest individual score, 415 not out. Hadath won through to the school captaincy, and then went up to Cambridge, where in due course he took his M.A. degree with classical honours. His studies by no means exhausted his energies, however, for I find in the records that he won his college (Peterhouse) colours for cricket, Rugby, and Soccer. That it was no mean achievement to get in the Peterhouse eleven in those days may be gathered from the fact that the team included such famous men as George Beldam and Cyril Beldam of Middlesex, D. L. A. Jephson of Surrey, and R. B. Sweet-Escott, the Welsh Rugger International and Glamorgan cricketer. Batsman and bowler too (thirteen wickets for thirty-nine, hat trick twice in one innings, was one of his little achievements when playing for the Devonshire club championship), he was chosen to play for the Gentlemen of Surrey, and for many years he has played regularly for that exceptionally strong touring club, the Wanderers. Leaving Cambridge he took to the scholastic profession, first going to Mr. Bertram Bennett's school in Devon, and played Rugger for Paignton, until a bad hurt in a cup tie put *finis* to his football career. He was afterwards Senior Classical Master at Guildford Grammar School, but while he was here Hadath's abilities broke out in a fresh spot, and he took to the writing of melodious songs. Most Captainites in their time have listened to the strains of "Down the Vale," which was one of our author's earliest efforts, and the immediate cause, on account of its phenomenal success, of his forsaking the school-

room for the poetic muse. His position now as a leading lyrist is unassailable; but even yet his greed for fame is unsatisfied, and he seeks—and is destined to win—the bays of authorship. In his love for boys' stories Gunby Hadath—a boy at heart and a sportsman all through—keeps the memory of his schooldays green. No man could be better fitted to write for THE CAPTAIN than he; he plays with a straight bat, and drives his hardest, and his method has brought him success in every branch of work and play. You will like his "Conquering Claybury"—not only because it is a story with a plot which is altogether new, but because it is brightly, freshly, and sincerely told. The personality of Gunby Hadath is expressed in every line, and it is an author's personality which lifts a story out of the common ruck.

as "Ian Maclaren," the author of those works which took Britain by storm, "Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush," "The Days of Auld Lang Syne," "Young Barbarians," and others. It was with the greatest delight that I was able to secure Mr. Watson's first important work for the benefit of Captainites, and it is in very truth that I say "White Man's Gold" is the most entrancing serial story I have ever read. Opening in Scotland, the scene shifts to Brazil, *via* New York, and every chapter of this great yarn finds the young hero confronted with circumstances—so exciting in themselves and so necessary to the development of the story—that require all his pluck and sagacity to surmount. "White Man's Gold" is a treasure story, but it is a treasure story of a most notable kind. It is written, not in a slipshod, "scramble-out-of-tight-corners-anyhow" way, but carefully, by a master hand, and thoroughly.

Mr Gunby Hadath

Mr H·M·Brock

A Son of Sedbergh.—Frederick Watson, who has specially written "White Man's Gold" for THE CAPTAIN, was educated at Sedbergh, the first Sedberghian, I believe, to be included amongst our contributors. Mr. Watson has literary blood—I might almost say literary blue blood—in his veins, for he is the son of the Rev. John Watson, known to a world-wide fame

At Sedbergh Mr. Watson was invited to edit the school magazine, but was compelled to decline owing to ill health. The *Granta*, too, he was offered at Cambridge, but still he evaded the editorial chair. He was at Edinburgh University for some time, and there he was prevailed upon to use his

literary efforts for the delectation of his fellows. And now, through the medium of the public school magazine, he appears as one of the principal authors, with a story which is certain to win for him immediate recognition.

Frederick Watson, too, is a cricketer of no mean skill. In the Authors *v.* Publishers match at Lord's last summer no less than three CAPTAIN serial writers were invited to play for the Authors. The three were P. G. Wodehouse, and the two new men, Gunby Hadath and Frederick Watson. But the author of "White Man's Gold" has sought and found most success in running, and his sideboard testifies to his ability in doing the 100yds. in pretty useful time. Space is being devoured all too rapidly, or I would tell you more of the details. But I have said sufficient, I think, to show you that Gunby Hadath and Frederick Watson are good fellows both, and of their power of story telling you will be able to judge for yourselves when you read "Conquering Claybury" and "White Man's Gold."

able to undertake the commission for "Conquering Claybury." The story will provide him with many opportunities to display his exceptional talent, and Captainites can look forward to a rare pictorial treat.

The artist who will illustrate "White Man's Gold" is Mr. John Cameron, whose skill with the brush is renowned the wide world over. Mr. Cameron has never "exhibited" in THE CAPTAIN before; but his work is of such a very high order, and so peculiarly suited to the requirements of this particular story, that he was especially asked to undertake it. His consent to do so completed my arrangements for making our next serials the very best in every way, and I am absolutely confident that THE CAPTAIN will still further heighten its reputation. Mr. Cameron was born in Ohio, but came to Scotland as a boy—"White Man's Gold" is entirely a Scottish piece of work!—and studied at the Glasgow School of Art. Thence he went to Paris, where he further studied at Julian's Academy, and afterwards to London. With what success his studies were endowed will be seen in his illustrations to the new volume.

Mr F. Watson

Mr John Cameron

No Finer Artist than Mr. H. M. Brock could possibly be secured to illustrate a school serial, and as his drawings have so often embellished our pages it is unnecessary for me to say anything about his work, except to express my pleasure that he was

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Spring is Coming, and with it will come, of course, the usual crop of spring poets. As a matter of fact the early doors are

already open, and through them has blown the following remarkable effusion, which I print merely to show that I have the moral courage to do so! It comes all the way from Moradabad, India, and is entitled:—

THE EDITOR: A PEEP BEHIND THE SCENES.

I.

He lies in bed and loudly snores;
It penetrates the upper floors,
And, winding, passes thro' the doors
Into the street!
Be not alarmed, dear reader mine,
It is the Editor's sleep sublime!
But, alas! 'tis not divine
To meet!
He wakes at nine, and rubs his eyes,
He groans and yawns and loudly sighs,
And news to his cranium flies—
A motley group!

II.

He kisses his wife, she slaps his face;
He pulls her nose, and tears her lace;
"Domestic happiness" grows apace—
Under his roof!
To his office and little den
He wends his way in anger then,
And slangs with editorial pen the
"budding" author!
Up, up, my comrades true and brave,
Be not the Editor's willing slave;
Destroy him and his jolly page,
In bloodless slaughter!

F. A. M.

Now I should like to answer these allegations seriatim. Whatever my faults may be they are not such as "F. A. M." has tuned his lute to. I do not (*a*) snore; nor (*b*) lie in bed till nine (I am on my way to the office long before then); I do not (*c*) let my wife slap my face; nor (*d*) pull her nose—for Mr. Punch has a sort of copyright in these pleasant little side-shows of home life. As a matter of fact I have a shrewd suspicion that "F. A. M." has got my identity badly mixed with that of the gentleman aforesaid. And as for wending my way in anger to the office, and "slanging the budding authors," I thoroughly agree with Euclid in his remarks about certain things being absurd. I haven't slanged an author, budding or full-blown, for many a long day, though I've a great temptation to do so at the present moment. And please, oh "comrades true and brave," please take note that both myself and my "jolly page" have a very healthy objection to being destroyed, whether the slaughter is bloodless or the other kind. In extenuation of his verse "F. A. M." says, "For some time I have bought THE CAPTAIN, and I am sending you these few lines as a contribution." I hope "F. A. M." will go on buying THE CAPTAIN for a long time, but I also hope that as the years roll by he will gradually feel better disposed towards me.

Answers to Correspondents

STAMPS

P. B. (Haywards Heath).—(1) Certainly a stamp with "some of its perforations missing," or even only a corner perforation, would be regarded as damaged. In auction catalogues you will see stamps described as with "few perfs. missing" or "corner perf. missing." (2) Stamps perforated with initials of business firms or companies are not regarded with favour by philatelists, but they would not in all cases be valueless on that account. (3) The U.S.A. "Documentary" stamps of 1898 were issued as tax stamps to help the Yankee-Spankee war; they were rouletted. (4) The control number for British stamps is found on the white margin of the entire sheet.

P. M. B. (Kingston Hill).—Values of British stamps do not depend on the corner lettering, but on the plate number. In the case of the sixpenny stamps with Queen's Head in hexagonal frame you will find the plate number either just above the lower corner letters or at the right and left points of the hexagon. Knowing the plate numbers you can ascertain the values from the catalogue. "Bright's A.B.C. Catalogue" (Bright & Son), of which a new edition has just appeared, is a good book for the purpose.

"Pen Pusher" (London).—Used British penny stamps of dates 1860-62 would be practically valueless except in large quantities.

"Novice" (Malvern).—In an ordinary album you would not include the different corner letterings of British stamps, but only in a large specialised collection.

GENERAL

"X. Y. Z."—Your fourpenny Queen Anne coin, 1708, is a Maundy piece. Sets of Maundy money (*1d.*, *2d.*, *3d.*, and *4d.*) were issued in nearly every year of Queen Anne's reign, and they are worth from *4s.* to *7s.* the set of four pieces if in "mint" or pretty nearly "mint" condition. A single fourpenny would be worth from *1s.* to *1s. 6d.*, according to state.

"No Sport" is fond of boxing, never smokes, has a cold shower every morning, gets a swim in sea-water baths every day at noon for nine months of the year, walks six miles each day to and from his work, and is fond of tramping over his native New Zealand hills. Yet he calls himself "No Sport"! The reason why he gives himself this altogether inappropriate description is that in all our stories fellows who don't play football and cricket when they are physically capable of doing

so are spoken of in contemptuous terms. But "No Sport" overlooks one essentially important point; our stories are written concerning British public schools, where football and cricket, our national games, are compulsory; the able-bodied fellow who endeavours to evade the games stamps himself therefore as a slacker, and not one in a hundred of his sort would take to the other healthy recreations, such as "No Sport" does, instead. In New Zealand the opportunities for playing cricket and football cannot be so much at every boy's disposal as they are in England, and such splendid sports as swimming, boxing, walking, and so on are every whit as good to the individual as footer and cricket. Certainly if you came to England, "No Sport," you would not be expected to play; from your photograph I can see that you are quite a "tough" chap, and by no means the "weedy," anæmic youth every healthy fellow despises. You must remember, "No Sport," that although most English boys play cricket and football, those two games are not the only ones they go in for; it is usually the keen cricketer or the ardent footballer who takes the greatest interest in other sports.

H. D. M. (Cradock, Cape Colony).—Your long letter interested me very much. Glad you take so much interest in the old mag. Your suggestion encounters a good many difficulties, but we will see what can be done.

E. W. S. (Eastbourne).—Your "herald of the New Year" came to hand all right, but I suffered something of a shock when I opened the lid. I appreciate your good intentions, but don't you think it rather unkind to send a *living* butterfly through the post like that? Somehow I fancy that a butterfly that fluttered into your house on New Year's Day deserved a better reception. I restored it to freedom *via* my office window, but I fear that even the bracing air of Southampton Street was not as welcome to it as the climate of sunny Eastbourne.

Gerald Fitz-G. wants to know what our address is! Funny question that, Gerald Fitz-G., since you ask it on a properly directed post-card! What's more to the point is, what's *your* address; for we cannot send you the rules and regulations of the Captain Club until you supply it, can we?

"The Garden Carrot" thinks that we might have a French translation competition. Somehow we are inclined to believe that did we do so the number of entries would be somewhat disappointing. What do other Captainites say?

"Warren Hastings."—The age limits for the Indian Civil Service are twenty-two and twenty-four; and the medical test which candidates have to pass is fairly stringent. There is a wide choice of subjects, and full details of these will be sent to you on application to the Secretary, the Civil Service Commissioners, Burlington House, W.C. The examinations you mention are of no direct value, though the training you have undergone to pass them will naturally be of service to you.

"Argentino."—Foreign and Colonial Captainites will not be neglected in our plans for new competitions. We offer separate prizes for them, and give them a special closing date, in this month's competition.

J. W. W.—To obtain an appointment of the kind you desire your best plan would probably be to obtain from Spring Gardens, W.C., particulars of the appointments open in the architects' department of the London County Council. There are a large number of minor appointments, which might lead to a senior assistantship, at a salary of £300-400 a year, a principal assistantship, at £400-500 a year, or the position of assistant architect, at £500-600 a year. With the qualifications you mention, you ought not to find a position in the department difficult of attainment. As regards the chances of an architectural draughtsman abroad, you should apply to the Emigrants Information Bureau, 34, Broadway, Westminster, S.W.

P. E. C.—The rules and conditions governing the profession of chartered accountant can be obtained from the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Moorgate Place, London, E.C. You must be articled to an associate or fellow of the institute while preparing for the examinations, and the preliminary examination can be taken after the age of sixteen. Exemption from passing the preliminary, on payment of a fee of one guinea, is granted to candidates who have already passed certain public examinations, of which the Oxford Local Senior, in which I note you have been very successful, is one.

"Martin Harvey."—The nervousness which causes you to blush in company is not uncommon among growing fellows, and you will grow out of it. But by making a strong effort to overcome your self-consciousness you can conquer the habit now. When you enter a railway carriage or a roomful of company you must not imagine that everyone is particularly interested in you. Do not think about yourself at all; you may be quite sure that other people are not doing so. Above everything do not worry about your bashfulness—do not let the fear of it enter your mind when you are about to meet people. That, "Martin Harvey," is "the only way."

G. H. T. (Hull).—The number of King's Messengers is very small, and vacancies, therefore, rarely occur. They are filled by patronage, and it would be necessary for someone with Court influence to father your application before you could hope to obtain such an appointment.

"Amphibious."—The best way to secure the information you require is to write to some good shipping companies. You might also watch the advertisements in one or two trade papers, such as the *World's Carriers*.

A Difficult Choice

"I SAY, dad," began little Clarence, with the rising inflection of one who earnestly desires to acquire important information, "what——"

"Oh, I don't know," replied his long-suffering sire, wearily.

"Yes. But the question I wanted to ask isn't foolish, dad."

"H'm! If it isn't foolish you may ask it. But remember, just one question, and no more."

"Well, dad, there are two of 'em that I want to ask. One is, which is the smartest, the man who knows enough to know that he doesn't know much, or the man who knows enough to look as if he knew everything? The other is, if the end of the world was to come and the earth be destroyed while a man was up in a balloon, where would he land when he came down? And, pa, I don't know which one of 'em to ask?"

***

One of Them

His father was at the station when he stepped from the train.

"Why, Thomas, what are you home for? It isn't holiday time yet, surely!" said the old man.

"No," replied Tom, looking round for his trunk.

"Well, I thought you were not coming home again until the end of the term?"

"Changed my mind," was the laconic reply of the young hopeful. "And I'm not going back."

"Not going back! Why, what's that for?"

"Don't like it there," said Thomas.

"I always thought that was a very good school," said his father—"one of the best schools in the country."

"I'm not going back, all the same," said Tom, stepping from one foot to the other.

"Tom," said his father, earnestly, "that school has turned out some of the smartest men of this country."

"Yes, I know that—they turned *me* out!"

***

A Hard Job

"WHAT on earth," said a gentleman to his little son, who had lately gone to his first school, "are you doing up there, Johnny, sitting on the horse's back with a pencil and paper when you ought to be at school?"

"Teacher said I was to write a composition on a horse," said the boy, "and I'm trying to: but it's awful dif'cult, 'cos he will keep moving so. I s'pose that's why teacher gave it to us to do, isn't it?"

HE WOULD KEEP IT DARK

TACTLESS SMALL BOY (to Smithson, who has received a black eye in a little affray with the butcher's boy): "Oh, I say, Smithson, you won't half catch it when you get back!" SMITHSON: "You little idiot! I shan't let anyone know anything about it."

Blind with rage at the other's taunts, Tom flung the heavy inkpot at Pringle's head. Happily it missed its object, and the next instant he was seized and bundled quickly into the corridor.

SPLENDID NEW SERIAL

CONQUERING CLAYBURY

A Public School Story

By GUNBY HADATH - Illustrated by H. M. BROCK

CHAPTER I

"A RUM START!"

"I AM so grateful to you, Mr. Cyril."

"Oh, that's all right, Mrs. Strong. I'll look after him. Good-bye!"

The porters slammed the doors; the guard raised his flag; the inevitable eleventh-hour-and-fifty-ninth-minute traveller flung his panting person into the first carriage within reach; and the elder of the two boys drew up the window and settled himself to take stock of his companion.

Both were dressed in dark grey flannel and wide straws, yet the difference in their bearing was considerable, and much more marked than any disparity in age would have suggested. Nor was this dissimilarity attributable to the circumstance that whereas one was returning over familiar ground to familiar scenes, to the other the slam of the carriage door announced a launch into the unknown. The elder, sharp featured and emotionless, leaned back in his corner with the pose of proprietorship, fitting naturally into the picture, and suggesting the appearance of one who is perfectly satisfied with himself.

In comparison, the younger appeared raw and awkward. Sturdy and well built, he bore himself restlessly under the other's scrutiny, fidgeting in his place, and palpably self-conscious and uneasy in his brand-new clothes. He had removed his hat, to display a mop of tousled hair and features which, despite a liberal supply of the railway company's grime, were wholesome and good to look upon, distinguished by a pair of clear blue eyes that shone in nervous eagerness. He seemed anxious to please, but diffident; even, perhaps, a little frightened.

By precedent, no doubt, his thoughts should have been busy with the mother whom he had just left; with the life before and behind him; with all that orthodox array of dim delights and active apprehensions which are supposed to have occupied the minds of all of us on our first journey from home. But, in fact, Tom Strong was thinking of nothing of the sort. His meditations were entirely commonplace.

He was wondering how his companion managed to make his collar and tie fit so beautifully, how he kept such a lustre on his boots. He was envying him his self-possession, and the coolness with which he had bidden a porter to fetch some paper from the bookstall, and had tipped the man when he obeyed. He was speculating whether he himself would ever arrive at doing things in just the same manner. He was mildly jealous, although he did not know it.

And then, turning to the window to avoid the other's gaze, his eyes were brightened by sweet meadows and green hedges, and he followed eagerly the movements of a mare and her foal as they galloped, heads high, from the thunder of the train. And that recalled. . . .

"Hi! Wake up, kid! We shall be at the junction soon. We change there for the Claybury train."

"Yes, Cyril."

"And, I say! You mustn't call me Cyril, you know."

"No?"

"No! Only Brash. Don't forget!"

"Yes, Brash."

Cyril Brash, well in his second year at Claybury, was a self-possessed veteran of fifteen, but he grew conscious of some difficulty in leading his laconic charge to the lines of the conversation which he desired to pursue. He hesitated, gazed out of the window in his turn; at last resumed with less assurance.

"And another thing," he remarked, "if I were you, I shouldn't—tell the fellows—er—too much about—things."

"How?" asked the other, gravely.

"Oh, about yourself, you know. About how you got to Claybury—and the rest of it."

But Tom Strong kept an earnest silence. He only stared with his big blue eyes at his companion. So the latter, feeling more

uncomfortable and uncertain how to put it, went on to do his best.

"Well, you see," he explained, "keep it dark about your scholarship, and—your old school—and all that sort of thing. Do you follow?"

He was very much mistaken if he supposed that the other had not "followed." The boy was no numskull—otherwise he would never have been sitting in that carriage—and he blushed red at the words.

"Yes, I see," he muttered slowly. "But why should they want to know?"

"Oh, the other kids are sure to ask you. Don't you be pumped. That's all. And, I say?"

"Yes."

"Keep quite mum about—oh, hang it! can't you help a man out!"

"About what?"

"About the things—at—your mater's, you know!"

There was no doubt about the blush which this cryptic utterance evoked. From chin to hair the youngster flamed like a scarlet peony. The moralist, with full knowledge of the lad's history, might jump in here to brand him for a snob. He might go further, calling him harder names.

But the moralist would possibly have been wrong, like most of his kind who jump to conclusions. It is only in romances of a certain type that a blush betrays a guilty conscience or is sure evidence of shame. In life, on the contrary, it rarely expresses anything of this kind; and some of our most miserable sinners have never known the discomfort of a burning cheek. They could not blush if they were paid for the performance. But Tom Strong blushed under an emotion that defied analysis. He could not have told Brash why he blushed. He just blushed because he could not help himself.

The other leaned forward, gripping his knee and compelling his attention.

"That's all right," he stammered. "It doesn't matter a bit, really. Your mater's a jolly good sort; I could tell that at the station. Lots of people have kept shops. And of course I'll see you through, as my mater promised yours I would. But I'm sorry I was away all the holidays, else you could have come to my place and posted me up about things. As it is I'm a bit hazy. For one thing, what has my mater to do with your old school?"

"Tar Road is a County Council School, you see," replied the younger, "and Mrs. Brash is one of the managers. All Council schools have a lot of swells—I mean ladies and gentlemen—who come and visit them and see everything's all right. They're called managers."

"Oh, I see. And that's how the mater knew about you and your scholarship, eh?"

"Yes; that's how."

"But about that scholarship. I don't follow there. The mater says you're the first Council scholar—that was her word—who's ever been to a big public school. That's so, isn't it?"

"Well, no scholarship to Claybury or such a place has been offered to fellows like me before. Somebody left some money for this one in his will; the winner to hold it for five years. The first exam. was last June, open to all the boys in the Council schools in London who would be fourteen this September. I won it."

Brash whistled, forgetting for a moment his dignity as mentor and protector. "By Jove! You must be brainy!" he exclaimed. "You won it first go off! I guess there were heaps in for it!"

"Well, a good lot. But I was lucky."

"Anyhow, you've explained it a jolly sight clearer than my mater did. Now I can understand why she wanted me to look after you."

Brash was silent for a few minutes, digesting the information. When he spoke again it was rather lamely, and with less enthusiasm:—

"But you'll find no end of difference between Tar Road and Claybury, you know!"

Cyril Brash was a product of modern London, well advanced for his years, and possessing a good measure of superficial smartness. As he studied this quaint youngster of cheerful face and clumsy bearing, he was quite alive to the novelty of the situation, and the possibilities it held. Here, he reflected, was a fellow about to exchange poverty and yes—squalor, for the high atmosphere of a public school. How would he tone in with it? This alien, taken—as his mother had unhappily expressed it to some acquaintance in his hearing—"practically off the streets, my dear!" was to be dumped down side by side with the men of one of our historic institutions. How would he (and they) like it? What would come of the experiment? For nothing of the sort had ever been known at Claybury before! Well, there the fellow was; he looked presentable, didn't speak so badly, and his accent would pass all right

Unconsciously, perhaps, Brash summarised his conclusions aloud :—

"Well, it's a rum start, anyhow!" he ejaculated.

And the alien, reaching up to the rack as they slowed down by the platform of the junction, agreed that it was.

They alighted quickly, to be hailed by a knot of Claybury men who had been watching the train come in. There stood Phillips and Taylor, both of Brash's year, and Hammond of the Lower Sixth, pretending that he did not see them. There, too, were Steel and Matthews and red-haired Jukes, "the Flambeau." And he it was who first drew attention to Tom, where he lingered in his protector's wake and tried to look unconscious.

"Cheero, Brash!" said he. "What is it?"

"Only one of the new kids," answered the other. "He hangs out near me."

"Does he collect stamps?"

The question broke in shrilly in a thin falsetto from the background, and Brash turned at the voice.

"Hello, Butter!" he exclaimed, "I never saw you. Where's Eggs?"

"There!" And the speaker indicated a weedy figure which emerged at that moment from the refreshment room. His hair was jet black, his eyes were raven, and no sooner had they fallen on Tom than he came up at a trot.

"Eh? New babe?" he panted. "What's your name?"

"Strong!"

"Oh, Strong, is it? Do you collect stamps?"

To the new comer's disgust a roar of delight went round at the words.

"You're too late, Eggs, my son," laughed Taylor. "Butter's asked him."

For Butterick Ma and Butterick Mi—upon whom a wag of the obvious order had bestowed the obvious names—were the keenest stamp swoppers in the Lower School. They collected in partnership, but the younger never attempted to do business in the presence of his brother.

Tom had no idea what the general merriment might mean, but he welcomed it as distracting attention from himself. And when the train for Claybury came in, and he found himself sandwiched between Preston and Phillips, on the smallest area of the seat, nobody seemed to trouble about him. He was suffered to draw back into his shell, whence he watched the party quietly and closely, eager to pick up anything which might help him on arrival. The feeling that had possessed him when regarding Cyril now returned more poignantly.

Another thirty minutes, and he followed in their wake down the High Street of Market Twyford, and through the mile of countryside and lane which separates the town from the school. Here Brash dropped back to point out objects of familiar interest; the farm beyond the stile, where a man might fill his pillow-case with apples for threepence; Dicker's Livery Stables, whence the Army Class jobbed their horses; and "Father Raitt's"—that little shop on the right—which acted as illicit supplement to the school tuck-shop.

Entering the avenue where the bounds of Claybury begin, Tom clutched the other's elbow, and pointed to an obelisk of stone and marble, standing between the paths on an island of the greenest turf.

"What's that?" he asked.

Brash's figure straightened.

"That's the memorial," he said quietly, "to the O.C.'s who were killed in the South African War."

High and apart it stood, set there for all time to testify, name by name, to an immortal brotherhood. The two paused before it, till Tom's vivid imagination took wing, and he knew at last what his feelings in the train had been. He was envious; splendidly envious. How he wished that his name might have been written there, for all his kind to read! And on the thought came another, one that set his pulses beating and his body thrilling in a strange glow. He too—he, Tom Strong of Tar Road—was a part of that great whole! As no words could have done, this sentinel of others' glory brought the truth home to him, with all the pride of it. Those men, whose memory was honoured there, had come the very way that he had come. They had worked and quarrelled and played in the very spot where he was going to do the same. This had been their home, just as it was to be his. Possibly some of the masters who had taught them were there still, to teach him.

He would sit where they had sat; he might even have the desk which one of them had used.

Truly, as Brash had declared, it was a "rum start!"

CHAPTER II

PRINGLE'S IDEA OF HUMOUR

ARRIVED at the porter's lodge, Tom learned that he was assigned to Eagle's House, in which also were Brash, the two Buttericks, and others with whom he had travelled down. For a moment he fancied that his mentor's face fell when he heard that they were in the same house, but he dismissed the idea as a delusion, for Brash led the way merrily enough to the matron's room, where "Mother" Miles received them. As the kindly, grey-haired old lady dispensed the tea and cake she remarked, with a peculiar satisfaction, that none of the new boys who filled her room were as big and sturdy as the alien. She had been expressly forewarned of his arrival, and it pleased her to reflect that physically, at least, he was equipped to hold his own.

Thence Tom was dismissed to seek his dormitory, which accomplished, he followed at Brash's heels till call-over and lock-up, learning to find his way about. Eventually, after a kindly catechism at the hands of the "Old Bird"—as Mr. Eagle was known to the inmates of his house—and an attempt by Mrs. Eagle to draw him out, which was only partially successful, he got to bed at last, and fell asleep to dream that he was back again in Tar Road, where he and Brash were fighting for a scholarship to South Africa.

But Tom Strong was a proud man the next day when he found that he had slopped the Lower School, and was placed in Lower Middle I., which, at Claybury, is one remove only from the Upper School.

He was prouder still when, after second hour, he took possession of his locker in the Middle School class-room. At the locker adjoining stood a curly-headed youth, who whistled cheerfully as he affixed to the inside of his door a white slip of metal, bearing the legend *Patrick Terence Derry*.

"Those station machines are cute things for punching out a chap's name," he observed to Tom; and added, as an overture to conversation, "you're new, too, ain't you?"

"Yes," assented Tom.

"So am I. And we're both in the same form. I wonder ——"

But at that instant a hand fell upon the collar of each, and they were swung round, to observe the scraggy form and eager features of Butterick Ma. He led them silently and solemnly to the table, where he seated himself between them on the form.

"Now," he piped in his thin falsetto, "you're Strong, and your name's what?"

"Derry!"

"Oh, Derry! Strong and Derry. Derry Strong—very strong. Funny, isn't it?"

Derry did his best to laugh. Tom never moved a muscle.

"Well, if you kids collect stamps, we'll swop you some rippers." Here Butterick produced a stamp album and a biscuit box, which he placed on the table before them. "Now, what do you say to a scarlet Costa Rica?"

"Please, I don't collect," murmured Derry.

"Then! we'll start you with a topping collection."

"We! Who's we?" cried Derry.

"Eggs and myself, of course," answered Butterick.

Presently Tom and Derry came to learn that neither of the brothers Butterick ever spoke of himself in the first person singular. Each was accustomed to identify himself with the other on all occasions; it was never "I" or "me" with either of the Buttericks.

Their captor dived into the biscuit box. "Now, look here! Here's a French——"

It had been decreed, however, that his victims should not embark that day upon the career of a philatelist. For down the corridor rang a sudden cry:—

"Class-room! Class-room!"

Butterick looked up, hesitating. The table at which they sat was close to the door, some distance from a knot of boys who were lounging and chattering at the other end of the room. One of these, glancing round at the call, remarked Butterick, and cried: "You're nearest, Butter! buck up!"

"Class-room!" came the voice again. Whereat the collector gathered up his album and his box, and bolted out into the corridor. From the fireplace Preston sauntered over to the two boys on the form.

"You were nearest the door actually," he observed, indicating Derry. "But new kids have no fagging for their first week."

"Thanks," said Derry, "I see. And the chap next the door always has to fag to the call?"

Preston explained that that was so.

During this episode, Tom's eyes had been opening wider and wider. He was delighted with their release from the stamp problem, but more astonished at Butterick's lazy

disappearance to the call of "class-room." Now the words which passed between Preston and his new acquaintance only increased the puzzle. He turned eagerly to the latter.

"Here, you men," he cried, "here's a chap who doesn't know what fagging is!"

"Who?"

"Rot!"

"Keep it dark about your scholarship, and your old school, and all that sort of thing. Keep mum about it, or you'll be in for a bad time."

"I say, Derry, what does he mean by saying that we've no fagging to do for the first week?" he asked. "What *is* fagging?"

It was Derry's turn to be surprised. He swung round, cackled softly, then laughed aloud for the benefit of one and all.

"Let's have a look!"

With a rush they came crowding round, and Tom wished that he could recall the question But he stuck to his guns.

"No, I don't," he repeated sullenly.

Preston, who strove to make some reputation

as a wag, mounted the table, and, shaping his hands into the form of a telescope, scrutinised the phenomenon whose ignorance was so appalling. At last he dropped his arms, and came lightly to the floor.

"Spin me!" he sang. "O spin me, do!"

The colour had risen to Tom's face, and he might have taken his tormentor with some violence at his word, had not the clang of the dinner bell put an end to the proceedings. But he determined to have it out with Derry.

And in the afternoon he found his opportunity, when the two were alone in a corner of the quad.

"Look here," he began, stoutly, "why should I know all about fagging?"

The question was a genuine puzzle to Derry. Surely every man who had been to a Preparatory knew something about fagging? That morning, in the company of the others, this new chap's ignorance had struck him as a good joke. It seemed different now; the fellow was so earnest about it.

"What a chap you are!" he exclaimed. "What's it matter, anyhow? You'll learn soon enough. All the Lower and Middle have to fag for the men in the Upper—do study jobs, look after their things, run errands, and all that. It's not bad; and very often they give you things they don't want," he concluded, vaguely.

"But you said this was your first term?"

"Yes, it is," said Derry.

"Then how do you know all that?"

"Oh, I was at Spender's."

"Where?"

"Spender's! You must have heard of Spender's, at Harrow? All Spender's men go to Claybury, or Winchester, or Harrow. But, Strong?"

"Yes?"

"You *are* rum, you know. You're a lot bigger than most of us, but you seem as if you were funky of something."

Tom knew that the other had found the exact words to describe his feeling. He felt exactly that—"funky of something"—funky of everything because everything was strange to him. But he had been trying not to show it.

Away from the others Derry appeared almost sympathetic.

"Are you home-sick?" he asked.

"No," said Tom, "of course not."

Brash had warned him not to plead guilty to home-sickness. His nervousness was beginning to wear off; he raised his head, and came to a mighty resolution

"Look here, Derry," he began again, "I don't know anything about fagging, or all the things you know about. Shall I tell you why?"

His confusion was not completely gone, and it did not escape his companion. Very little did.

"Oh, I don't care," he replied. "It makes no odds."

"But I'd rather, if you don't mind," stammered Tom. "Because I do feel rum, as you put it. I've never been with fellows like you before."

"But you're jolly hot at mugging, or you wouldn't have been put straight in the Middle!"

Then Derry was sorry, for he remembered that he too was in the Middle. It seemed like swaggering.

"I haven't been to a swell school, like you and the other fellows," Tom was proceeding stolidly. "I was at a Council school. I won a schol. here."

But this conveyed nothing to the other, County Councils were outside all his experience.

"I knew you were beastly clever, anyhow," he murmured. "What is a Council school?"

Tom was puzzled for a definition, but at last he found one.

"They're schools the London County Council makes you go to," explained, "whether you want to or not. They're free."

"No fees?" asked Derry.

"No!"

Then at length did Derry understand. Possibly he remembered an ugly, red-brick structure not far from the station at Harrow, and the lads who passed to and from it.

"Crumbs!" he exclaimed, incredulously. "A Board school!"

"Yes," muttered Tom, drawing patterns on the gravel with his toe, "a Board school. They used to call them that, I think. Well, I was in a London Board school."

"Rats!" ejaculated the other.

"No—gospel truth!"

"All right," said Derry, a little strangely. "And, I say. We don't say 'gospel truth.' It's bad form."

But at this moment, when both were feeling uncomfortable, a sharp shower of rain drove them indoors. In the class-room they found Brash and the two Buttericks disputing over a sheet of stamps. They were followed by a noisy mob of shelterers, one of whom made a snatch at the sheet in "Butter's" hand. Whereupon the latter thrust it into his

pocket, returning some uncomplimentary allusion to the other's head.

There was nothing subtle about Butterick Ma's wit. His retorts were of that broad and personal character which generally gets home, and the youth whom he addressed winced at the remark.

From his bearing Pringle might have been seventeen, but in reality he was a full two years younger. His appearance was scarcely attractive. His lips were thin, stretched over prominent teeth. His eyes were set close—far too close—together, and his conical head slanted back obliquely from his forehead. Nothing stirred him so easily as an allusion to its shape.

"All right," he snarled, "stow it! Who're the kids?"

"Ask them yourself," piped Butterick.

So for the ninth or tenth time that day did Tom and Derry repeat the particulars of their baptism. But Pringle's narrow eyes were watching the former closely; the lad's uncouthness struck him as peculiar.

"Here you, Strong," he proceeded, roughly, "where do you come from?"

"London," answered Tom.

"What school, goat?"

Tom glanced quickly at Brash, but failed to catch his eye. He kept silence, while his mind worked rapidly. He had told Derry; he was thinking—why not get the job done, and tell them all? It was bound to come out soon. But there must be no beating about the bush this time; he must get it over once and for all, and put in a way, too, that everybody might understand.

And then he did see Brash—Brash frowning and shaking his head at him behind Pringle's back. At the same moment his examiner bent forward, and took him by the collar.

"What school?" he repeated.

Tom shook himself free, and faced him.

"Tar Road School!" he shouted. And again, emphasising every word, "It's a Board school, if you want to know!"

If the Head himself, in his robes and hood of office, had materialised that instant in their midst his appearance would scarcely have surprised—or stilled—the company more completely than Tom's announcement. They surrounded him, tongue-tied, staring as if he were the object of some curious discovery. (Which, precisely, he was.) A Board school boy at Claybury! The idea was impossible—absolutely ridiculous!

Pringle was the first to recover himself.

"You're lying!" he snarled.

"I'm not!" said Tom.

And then Preston recollected that the curio had arrived under the wing of Brash, and Preston was eager to curry favour.

"Brash knows all about it, Pringle," he exclaimed. "Brash brought him down yesterday."

"Oh, he does, does he? Hi, Brash!"

But Brash, very quietly, had slipped out of the room.

An exhibition of cheap jest, and more or less good-natured witticism followed; everybody found something facetious to remark.

"Hi! Stop him, somebody!" cried Pringle, as Tom made a bolt for the corridor. "I like his beastly cheek!"

Three or four of the Preston kidney brought the culprit back, and Pringle gripped him by the wrist.

"Now," he said, "what have you got to say for yourself? Bounder!"

No answer.

"Do you hear? What do you mean by it?"

"By what?"

"By coming here—*here?*"

Again no answer.

"Oh, all right. You're dumb, are you? Do you know what I'm going to do with you—you little beast?"

"Leave him alone, you cad!"

The interruption and its maker astonished more than Pringle. They rarely knew old Butter to bother about anything but stamps, and had more rarely seen him roused. But his interference was unhappy.

For Pringle might have dropped the matter if he had not been smarting still under the other's allusion to his head. He saw at once, as he supposed, an opportunity of getting his own back. So Butter was sticking up for the brute, was he? Well, if Butter fancied that would help him he should see that he was jolly well mistaken.

He affected to have heard nothing.

"Do you know what I'm going to do with you?"

"No," muttered Tom.

"I'm going to stick you in the museum. See?"

Somebody—probably Preston—laughed shrilly. Pringle imagined that he had said something quite clever, and continued vastly encouraged:—

"And do you know what I'm going to do next?"

"No," muttered Tom, ominously meek.

"I shall cut a big label. And I shall tie it round your neck. And I shall write on it, 'Choice specimen of a Board school bounder. Discovered at Claybury by T. Pringle, Esq.'"

The thin lips were close to Tom's face; the narrow eyes stared cruelly into the blue ones.

"Cad!" This from Butterick Ma again.

"Beast! Try and do it!"

And this from the "bounder," with the rougher accent of three months ago, while with a wrench and twist he freed himself once more.

Instinctively the others drew further from the two, all but the Buttericks, who called the rebel "Good man!" and bade him cut off quickly. But Tom's next move was deliberate and surprising.

Watching Pringle warily, where he leaned against the mantelshelf, he backed slowly to the table. There he turned, seized a metal inkpot, and flung it at the other.

Happily it missed him, and fell harmlessly from the wall.

Tom's face was white, and his teeth chattered. Blind with rage, he knew nothing but the primitive instinct of revenge. That heavy inkpots were not hurled so murderously at Claybury he had no conception whatsoever.

Butterick clutched his sleeve.

"Easy!" he cried. "Easy, my boy! Cut!"

"I won't! I don't care! I hate the beast!"

Pringle sprang forward, glancing at the table to assure himself that it held no further missiles.

"Gutter-snipe!" he hissed. "Wait till afterwards. I'll give you the thrashing of your lifetime!"

"Gutter-snipe yourself!" spluttered Tom, and now every tone bore the stamp of Tar Road.

Whereupon Butterick Ma and Mi bundled him quickly into the corridor, and so put an end to the proceedings, to the great relief of the company. But Pringle was not likely to forget.

CHAPTER III

DERRY WRITES A NOTE

TOM'S mind was in a tumult of sensations when he went into school that afternoon.

It was the excellent habit of Herbert Lascelles, M.A. (who existed only for the smaller boys of Claybury and for the game of golf), to allow his charges a day or two's comparative inaction before he pressed them to their work. "First I take them over the course," as he phrased it in the masters' common-room, "I never bother them to swing until they know how to hold the club." Thus any new boy who fell direct into Mr. Lascelles' hands might be sure of some prefatory repose while he was "taken over the course," so long as he behaved himself.

Tom found ample opportunity, then, while many pens scratched softly in the stillness of the afternoon, to brood over the misadventure of the morning. The book beneath his nose might have been written in Tamil or Sanscrit for all that he was deriving from it. Head between his hands, he leaned over his desk; and Mr. Lascelles, with a shrewd glance at the brooding figure, divined at once how far his thoughts were wandering. But he left him unmolested.

To that good sportsman it seemed only natural that the lad's thoughts should wander. He had been informed of his history, and was reflecting, while he watched him, that the new comer carried a stiff handicap, and would find some awkward bunkers on his way through Claybury. Would he succeed in getting over them?

And Tom, on his part, was telling himself that he was a stranger in an enemy's country, a pariah to his fellows. This morning Preston, who sat on his right, had edged up to him with overtures of friendship. This afternoon a great gulf of form was set between them; Preston had drawn himself as far as possible away. This morning he had been a Claybury man; this afternoon he remained a Tar Road "bounder."

His vivid imagination wrought him poor service here. It had stirred all his emotions into action yesterday—at that first sight of the South African memorial—releasing his *alter ego* from the husk of its antecedents. In such release he had risen intuitively very near to the plane which these others had occupied from their birth. But he had fallen back again. Imagination and temperament were uniting now to declare that never could the husk be shed. That Pringle and his kind would not suffer it to be shed.

If he had been less emotional, less imaginative, less of that temperament which the poverty of our language defines as "highly strung," Tom Strong would have been spared this suffering. But, then, in that case, he could hardly have got to Claybury; he might, rather, have been running errands for a tradesman.

If he had seen a little more of life; if he had

possessed brothers and sisters; if he had mixed more freely with his fellows in Tar Road, Pringle's taunts and nastiness, however they hurt, could not possibly have assumed anything but their relative proportion. But now they had grown into a mountain of injustice; a gross shadow of misery whereunder he was cowering despairingly.

For to Tom, as he brooded there, all Claybury seemed focussed into Pringle. The new life was—Pringle. Each day, one to follow the other to a remote and scarce imaginable Christmas, would be—Pringle. Everything to which he had been looking forward appeared realised now—it had become Pringle.

Our friend the moralist (jumping in again) will remark that the boy was precocious and morbid, or, more succinctly, "a silly little ass." Well, we need not quarrel with the definition. In some respects he may have been a "silly little ass." But I wonder how often our moralist has borne himself in a fashion to deserve the character before he was translated to stand-up collars and a walking-stick? Or—in a whisper—afterwards?

While Tom sat in this manner, nursing his sorrow and pitying himself exceedingly; a youth three rows behind him was conning the verse of that bard who has enlivened the pages of the Public School Latin Primer by singing the song of *artifex*.

This youth, lately *the* man of Spender's Preparatory, had now come to regard himself as a very tiny speck upon the universe; and it must be confessed that his thoughts, too, were wandering. He wrestled with a problem larger by far than that which the primer poet has immortalised for every generation of schoolboy.

"Common are to either sex, *Artifex* and *opifex*," repeated Derry under his breath; "*conviva vates* (what a brute Pringle is!) *advena* (Strong didn't funk him, though!) *testis*, *civis* (jolly plucky beggar!) *incola* (bad rhyme that! There's something not half bad about him) *parens*, *sacerdos*, *custos vindex* (it's low down to rag him for it) *adolescens*, *infans*, *index* (it isn't his own fault, anyhow)—with *Hadria* (I wish I hadn't given him away this morning!) *the Adriatic Sea*."

Then did Patrick Terence Derry tear a corner off the poet's page, and, cautiously raising his head until his eyes held the form of Mr. Lascelles, he crooked his left arm, and stretched it forward across his book. Thus he formed a capital screen to the movements of his right hand. Next he rose in his place, remarking:—

"Please, sir."

"Yes, Derry."

"May I come up?"

Primer in hand he advanced to the dais, but as he brushed past Tom something round and white dropped in front of the brooder's nose. Presently, Mr. Lascelles being busy with the industrious Derry, Tom opened the note furtively.

"I'm beastly sorry about this morning.—D."

Derry, returning to his place, shot a quick glance at the other, and knew that his message had been read. But it was not until he had grown up and gone out into the world that he came fully to understand how much those few words had accomplished.

They struck like a knife at the heart of the other's despair. On the moment of his despondency they fell like the light of another day. Again and again he read them; their meaning was unmistakable. Round swung Tom's feelings, until Pringle appeared no longer the alpha and the omega of existence. Derry, as he recalled, had come from one of the best schools anywhere, and *he* was not cutting him. Derry, who must be no end of a "swell" at home (swell is still a generic term in the vocabulary of Tar Road), was actually apologising to him! Then by Derry he was clearly not taboo!

And this brought back another recollection, that of Butterick Ma. Why, Butterick, too, had seemed to stand up for him! After all, he might not be a pariah!

His heart was warming to these two, and a great gush of gratitude to Derry took him as he put the note away. And he promised himself always to remember the debt he owed to this new friend; hoping that some day he might even be able to repay it.

He had put the note in his pocket; but more than once he took it out again before the end of school.

CHAPTER IV

SIR PATRICK FORGETS TO CLOSE THE DOOR

IT will be remembered that Brash had slipped out of the class-room at the moment of the encounter with Pringle, and Tom saw very little of him during the weeks that followed.

In school work the two had no opportunities

of meeting, as the elder boy was in Upper Middle I., at the head of the Middle School; and when they came across each other in the corridor or quad it seemed to be at times when Brash was always busy, with never a second for anything beyond his stereotyped "How goes it?" before he hurried off.

But in his growing friendship with Derry, and the novelty of his strange surroundings Tom saw nothing disappointing in his mentor's attitude, and it never entered his head that the latter might, after the fashion of diplomatists of every age, be watching to see "how the cat jumped," or, in blunter language, how the new comer was received before he took him under his wing. He was waiting for Pringle's next move.

But Pringle made no move.

He left Tom unmolested actively, with no attempt to inflict the threatened thrashing. It was plain, however, that he had neither forgotten nor forgiven; he was at pains to show himself aggrieved by the other's presence in the house, scowling at him whenever they met, and making a great parade of removing his immaculate person from the "bounder's" neighbourhood. Preston and a few time-servers of his sort took their cue from this attitude, and for a time were most industrious in spreading the news of the black sheep in the fold. At first, indeed, they had gone further and attempted a little baiting; but they found their quarry active and ready to hold his own in a scuffle. But the others of the Lower and Middle School in Eagle's neither sought to make the boy uncomfortable nor betrayed any eagerness for his society; and the big men of the Upper School, though they came to hear of the stranger's antecedents, gave no indication of their feelings to the rank and file. In one very favourable moment—when he had just made Hammond's toast, to the lively satisfaction of that magnate and of Wynne, the house captain—Preston had ventured a delicate allusion to the subject. But he had drawn nothing in return, excepting a command to "mind his own silly business" and a sharp confirmation from Wynne's boot. He did not renew the experiment.

In the delights of the gym., the junior runs, and Rugger, varied with a growing anxiety to avoid hurting Butterick's feelings by feigning an interest in stamps (a subject which left him very cold), Tom found too much to think about to brood over a few slights and cuffs, or even to resent them. If he was not entirely happy, neither did he renew the misery of that first afternoon. And presently the keenness he displayed for football, and a certain happy knack he showed for wriggling through the ruck in the "Hoi Polloi," as they term the small game at Claybury, first began to win for him a fashion of respect, and next came to the ears of Phillipson, who captained the house fifteen. And one day, to his mingled dread and astonishment, he was bidden to that magnate's study, and told a few matters about Rugby football, and the science of half-back play in particular, which he made much haste to record in a letter to his mother, lest, as he explained to her, he might forget them.

When shortly afterwards he was posted up for trial in the Thirty, and when at half-time he was tried for a few minutes at scrum half, his delight was something to be remembered, and was reflected on the touch-line by the frantic antics of Derry. Finally, this new and serious interest in life came to culmination on a day when Phillipson had sent for him and remarked casually that "it wouldn't do him any harm if he practised flinging the ball about whenever he got the chance."

Some boys have no talent for games, and no amount of pains and practice will make anything of such material. Others by application and hard grind can be coached and trained into an ultra-average standard of proficiency. But a few there are who take as naturally to field sports as a duck to its pool and pond. Well it is for such if a good coach is at hand to counsel and instruct the first development of their genius. For many a potential Maclaren has been lost to the world of cricket by lack of the right touch at the beginning.

Phillipson was not only keen on the house Rugger, but he was gifted with a shrewd eye for likely talent. He was patient, and he built for his successor. The speed, the coolness, and the pluck of the fourteen-year-old youngster were all appraised by him at their full promise; he looked on Tom's deep chest and strong legs, and vowed that they should not be wasted. "If you skipper Eagle's when I'm gone," he had told Coxon one night in their study, "don't forget that you'll have something more than useful in that kid!"

Claybury football had never been much stronger than it was that winter term, and the Old Claybburians marked the fact by bringing down the best side to be collected for the annual match.

"School! school!" bayed Derry and Sir Patrick.

"He's in, he's in!" gasped Tom, as Hammond swerved outwards, dodged the three-quarter, and went ahead.

Tom and Derry, loitering with other small fry in the quad before lock-up on the Friday, watched stray warriors arrive, heard them banter the dignity of Nathan Crump, the porter; and marked their small companions swell visibly at any word of recognition. "There's Green! He got his blue at Cambridge!" and "That's Smith, he's in the Engineers!" and "Look! Here's Tubby Noakes! I often fagged for him!"—so fell the whispers of healthy hero worship.

But Derry had a greater reason for excitement — a very excellent one — which materialised next day in the person of his father. Sir Patrick Derry had come down to see his son, and shortly he was standing with that delighted youngster by the ropes, while on the terrace above Big Side clustered the school fifteen, waiting for the old boys to doff sweaters and to business.

But presently, and before the referee had blown his whistle, Derry was off and back again with Tom.

"Strong. My chum, pater."

Tom was shy and embarrassed as Sir Patrick shook his hand with a cordial remark, and ran a careless eye over his pleasant features. But soon an exclamation which dropped from the new comer's lips in the excitement of the game, and the tone in which it fell, drew a sharper glance from Derry's father, and a slight lift of the brows.

And now the O.C.'s, led by Green—who did the work of any two—had rushed the game down to the school end. "Feet, forwards! Feet!" you heard Green shouting, for the rain had begun to fall heavily, and the turf was churning into mud. And "School! Scho-ol!" came back in steady murmur from the ropes. For there is no excited screaming from the throats of those who line Big Side at Claybury. Only that deep-chested bay of "School!" which falls and rises like the beat of a winter tide, and has inspired generation after generation of Claybury fifteens to play the game (and nothing but the game) in victory or defeat.

No easy job to handle the ball cleanly now. But somehow Hammond managed to get it out to Phillipson, and Phillipson, taking it in his stride, made fifty yards up the touch-line before he fell into the arms of the O.C. full-back. But as they came to ground Eagle's skipper dropped the ball, and a forward following up apace dribbled it ahead again, and then, kicking harder, raced full speed in pursuit.

"School! Scho-ol!" bayed Derry and Sir Patrick; but, alas! Smith, of the United Services, had flashed across, and, though he failed to gather in the mud, just managed to get it into touch. Back came the O.C.'s, pounding back to a throw-out twenty yards from their goal-line, and up and out the ball soared, flung to the far end of the lines, where Hammond had it again. He swerved outwards, with a quick feint made to throw it to the three-quarter on his left, stopped in his stride, dodged in again, and went ahead.

"He's in!" gasped Tom. "No—they've downed him! No—he's in! He's in!"

And so he was. And Sir Patrick came near to forgetting the decorum of his years when Coxon had placed the heavy ball cleanly over the middle of the bar.

With half-time, the school leading by a goal to nothing, and the rain pouring down heavier than ever, it is possible that the baronet might have hastened to follow other relatives and parents to shelter, but the enthusiasm of his son's chum, and something more pronounced in the eager youngster's manner, kept him by them in the rain. He plunged his hands deeper in the pockets of his ulster, shivered, and studied Tom closely.

And nothing but physical force would have dragged Tom from that second half. The panting of the players' breath, the "splush" of their feet through the mud, the dull rhythm and motion of the whole—these were music and poetry to him. His heart seemed to stand still when the O.C.'s—going all out for a win, and favoured by the conditions—looked certain time and time again to score; and once, when Green was held up on the very line, his agitation expressed itself again in the cockney vernacular of Tar Road.

Followed a long period of scrummaging in midfield, punctuated by a bout or two of combination among the school backs, or some clever piece of individualism by one of the O.C.'s. The jerseys of the latter, formerly a bright array of the multi-colours of club and college, assumed more and more a muddy uniformity, and Green had long since ceased to be distinguishable by his coveted stripes of light blue and white. But his big body was everywhere. And he it was who succeeded at last in bullocking his way across with the try so hardly won; a try that Smith goaled with the left leg that had sent many a ball over the bars of Big Side a year or two ago.

Another score now to either side must surely spell victory, but, work as they might, the school backs were handicapped by the slippery, sodden mass of leather that commenced life as a football. Many a good pass was dropped at a moment when it might have turned the game.

Incessant over the struggle rang Green's command of "Feet! Use your feet!" till Phillipson and his backs began to fancy all their future would consist of dropping at labouring forwards' toes, or diving head first into a *mêlée* of scrambling legs.

It happened, however, that the scrum half to Hammond remembered that a game is won as often by the head as by the hands (or even by the feet of Green's idolatry), and presently, in a moment's respite while Noakes was replacing a ripped jersey, he took counsel with his partner.

"Next time we're near enough, Ham," he panted, "stand deeper. And don't pass when I sling it out to you."

"No?" queried Hammond.

"No. Take a pot at goal."

Noakes wriggled gratefully into the clean, dry jersey, and the fight went on. But Herbert Lascelles, M.A., who was refereeing—he had been a hefty forward before he succumbed to golf—was beginning to look frequently at his watch. And the eyes of Sir Patrick, shivering and stamping his drenched boots on the board behind the line, shone eagerly when he observed the action.

"Schcol! Scho-ool!"

The bay rose steady and continuous. An O.C. was all but through, but a mass of animate mud threw itself in his way, gripped and held him by the knees. "School! Scho-oo-ool!" as a wild pass was intercepted by a black-haired youth (he had scarcely taken a pass himself that day), and a moment late Green flung him to mother earth. And "School! Scho-oo-ool! Scho-oo-oo-ool!" when a loose rush took the ball well into the enemy's quarters, and down into the scrum again plunged those writhing, spluttering sixteen.

"Out with her!" cried the little half behind the Claybury eight, in plaintive agony of entreaty; then dived, and had "her." All hands and arms he fell, his *vis-à-vis* upon him, but not before he had thrown the ball to Hammond, where he stood well back.

The briefest second's interval was given to Hammond to remember, and to act. But it was enough. For while his threes' fingers tingled for the pass that never came, Hammond shot forward, dropped the ball—and kicked. On the crossbar of the O.C. goal it fell, trembled, then leisurely toppled over and behind.

Mr. Lascelles' whistle trilled into a long (and, I believe, exulting) blast. Sir Patrick sighed and shook himself.

"And now I think we'll have some tea," he said, and looked round to find himself abandoned. For already Tom and Derry were steaming off to thrust themselves into the crowd of youngsters who were converging from all sides on to the terrace, where they crushed into a queue down which the vanquished and the victors must pass on their way to shandygaff and baths.

This ritual duly observed, the truants returned to follow Derry's father into the tea-room adjoining the tuck-shop, whereto parents and grown-up sisters are led on such occasions to refresh the juveniles of Claybury. Over the cake and jam Sir Patrick had been promising himself to draw Tom out. But with the stimulus of the game removed the lad became shy and diffident again, and the old awkwardness returned and grew upon him. He answered the baronet in halting monosyllables, and appeared frightened in his company. So Derry was left to do the talk, and, in parenthesis, he did it very well.

So far as they go, tea and jam and cake are no despicable factors on the road to happiness. But they pale into the puniest proportions before a certain very big and square chunk of chocolate containing a pasty compound of the cream variety, and not to be discovered, even by the most assiduous research, anywhere but in the tuck-shop of Claybury School. The story runs and holds credence among the juniors that old Claybury men still send regularly from all parts of the world for this delicious sweetmeat. Should a visitor inquire of Joe and his two sons who tend the shop if this rumour may be believed, they will smile enigmatically, and turn to a discussion of the weather. But if the story is not true it deserves to be, since no luxury known to mankind can excel these chocolate "cadenzas"—and why "cadenza" has never been ascertained.

Derry lost no time in introducing his father to these delicacies, and upon them the two small boys and the big bronzed one (for Sir Patrick had all the spirits and exuberance of his son) regaled with much contentment. Till time came for two of them to make a bolt to call-over in Big School.

Then the third, abandoned for awhile again, had a goodly parcel of the chocolate put up for him, and turned his steps, a little thoughtfully, to Eagle's house.

As he passed under the archway a youth, with conical head and narrow eyes, who had obtained leave off from call-over to fag for the Old Boys changing in Eagle's, came clattering down the wide stone steps.

Pringle looked up quickly. He had marked the three together as they stood and watched the match, and fancied that the well-groomed visitor must be Derry's father. And since the stranger was hesitating and appearing at a loss, he hastened to proffer his services.

"Are you looking for Mr. Eagle, sir?" he ventured. "I think he is in the house."

"Ah, ye-es," returned Sir Patrick, in abstraction. "I shall be much obliged if you can take me to him."

"Derry's father, isn't it, sir?"

This with a smile, that was intended to convey a close and cordial relationship between himself and Derry. But Sir Patrick assenting with a nod, Pringle hurried on to indicate the door of Mr. Eagle's study.

When the baronet had knocked and entered, Pringle made no haste to clatter down the stairs again. He knew that he lingered on forbidden ground. But for him the temptation was too great. For Sir Patrick was a careless creature, and forgot to close the door completely after him. So Pringle waited in the

forbidden passage. And his hearing was remarkably acute.

The "Old Bird," a middle-aged man of spare habit, with very fuzzy eyebrows and a hawk eye that belied the round blandness of his face, swung round from papers he was busied with, and did not bless his visitor for the interruption. Yet from his manner it might have been supposed that nothing was more welcome.

"Yes, come in, come in!" he exclaimed. "You smoke, I think, Sir Patrick?"

"Ah, thank you, Mr. Eagle," replied his visitor, taking the proffered cigar. "A great game, wasn't it?"

"Yes, indeed! Or, at least, as much as I saw of it. You braved the weather out, then?"

"Had to!" The baronet laughed boyishly. A big man he was, and his head was streaked with grey; but save in actual stature he had never quite succeeded in growing up. "I believe my youngster and his chum would have scragged me if I'd tried to cut. Never saw a couple so confoundedly keen."

But Sir Patrick was embarrassed. Gentle as he was big, simple and kindly, with a keen delight in everything around him, and a warm interest that extended to the very rawest lad in his stables on the Curragh, the baronet was feeling almost afraid that moment of his son's master. He was telling himself that he was a trespasser. A dim but pricking curiosity had impelled him to this interview, yet he was terribly nervous of appearing curious, of saying something which he should not say; terribly frightened of hurting anybody's feelings.

"Quaint old stick, Eagle!" he was saying to himself. "Must go easy, or I'll put my foot in it."

The hawk eye of the Old Bird had never left his visitor's face, and he knew that he had not come to discuss either the football or tobacco. And being conscientious and precise, with an exact regard for the value of language, Mr. Eagle began to shape his thoughts to the report he might give of Derry and his progress, in readiness for the inquiry he anticipated.

Yet when it came it took him by surprise.

"By the way, Mr. Eagle—good lad that my boy has chummed up with. Ah—big lad, too! I suppose he—ah—hails from this way?" And then, to himself, "Rather neatly put, I fancy."

"I expect you mean Strong, Sir Patrick. He is a new boy. In the same form as yours."

"Oh! Ah! Yes! How interesting! The young rascals do each other's impositions, I expect. Shocking practice, Eagle—but monstrous natural! Hails from here, you say?"

Never was the parent found who could disguise his thoughts from the Old Bird.

"Strong comes from London," he answered, drily, with the flicker of a smile. "He won a scholarship here; and he will do well with his work, if he does not sacrifice everything to games. He'll be an athlete, Sir Patrick. A straight lad, too, I think."

Mr. Eagle had concluded decisively, as though the subject were exhausted. He was not particularly concerned to hide Strong's antecedents from his visitor, yet saw no occasion to volunteer the boy's history to every curious parent who examined him. But he had a liking for the big, boyish baronet, and remembered that he spoke to the father of Strong's chum. If he pressed the point, well, he was entitled to the whole of it.

Apparently the baronet did intend to press the point.

"Eh-ah! Never was much good at anything but games myself," he echoed. "But can always tell a straight lad. Good at his books as well, eh? Better than my young villain, I expect?"

"Less brilliant, but with more concentration, Sir Patrick."

"Ah, ye-es. Capital thing concentration—wish I had it. But it's a gift—like music—and, ah—poetry—and all that sort of thing. But a bit queer, eh?"

"What—concentration?"

The baronet chuckled.

"Good—jolly good! But I mean the other fellow—Strong. A little rough round the edges, perhaps? Gives one the impression that he's run a trifle wild—ah—when a colt, Eagle? Do you follow?"

The house master regarded him gravely, then rose and crossed to the fireplace. He raised his voice, and his tone assumed the manner of the school-room. Watching the other's embarrassment, he failed to observe that the door remained a trifle open.

"In one sense, Sir Patrick, you are right," he said, "and in another you are wrong. The lad has never known a home as you and I understand the word. No, listen"—for Sir Patrick was vigorously disclaiming any further curiosity. "Strong came here on a scholarship, the very first of its kind, from a County Council school in London. When a Mr. Bonnithorne endowed this scholarship—confined to Council lads, and to be administered by the Council—the

governing body of Claybury gave the proposal their most anxious deliberation. And eventually they found no good reason to refuse it."

"No, no, no! Of course not! Capital things, scholarships!" broke in Sir Patrick, as if pleading not guilty to some accusation to the contrary. "Never could have won a scholarship myself—no brains, you know."

He knew he'd put his foot in it, he told himself.

"Well, Strong was the boy who won it, Sir Patrick; and, subject always to good character and conduct, he will hold it for five years. When he leaves they will send another in his place. Naturally, the experiment, if I may—er—employ the term, is one of extreme interest to all of us masters here. We hope that the lad will do well. We are not apprehensive that he will bring any bad influence into the school; but we shall, of course—er—watch him closely. He is a trifle raw round the edges, as you express it, and you may reflect how very much will be strange, and—er—difficult to him. So far as I have been able to observe, however, he appears a good lad, Sir Patrick."

During this precise explanation the other had been shuffling restlessly, for all the world like one of Mr. Eagle's charges detected in a crime.

"Yes, yes—very good lad, I'm sure," he stammered; "fine straight lad, Eagle. Capital thing to have him here—very."

"His father died when he was born, Sir Patrick; and he has enjoyed even less opportunity than most of his kind for the exercise of—er—kindly domestic influences. His mother is a woman in, well, very humble circumstances."

"Er—ah! Remarkably fine arrangement," interrupted his harassed listener. "Capital idea—fine lad—very glad to hear it. Sorry I must be off."

"One minute, Sir Patrick. I wish you to hear all. Strong's mother—er—keeps a small—er—*shop*—in Kilburn somewhere."

(*To be continued.*)

QUESTIONS WE MAY EXPECT THIS CRICKET SEASON

Aunt Sophia (whose knowledge of cricket is slight): And those great shinguard things—they are to protect you from the kicks, I suppose?"

Farland's Greatest Climb

- By -
H. Mortimer Batten

He realised his utter helplessness, for he was entirely at the mercy of the men above.

I

THE CONSPIRATORS

IT was scarcely sunrise when Kennet Farland was wakened by the sound of someone stumbling over the guy-ropes outside his tent.

"Who's there?" he inquired sharply, at once wide awake.

From the entrance of the tent came an uneasy cough.

"Hope we ain't disturbed you, sir," said a voice in the faint brogue of the island. "We've got news that may interest you."

Kennet thought that it must be rather exceptional news that brought the visitors to his camp at such an early hour. A few days previously he had arrived at the little island of Marekirk in the hope of procuring photographs of some of the birds that haunted the sea cliffs. Already he had achieved local fame as a cliff-climber. The natives hunted the shelves for the purpose of procuring eggs, which they sold by way of a living; the gentleman naturalist defied the laws of gravitation, and daily risked his life for the fun of the thing. Moreover, he descended cliffs that the inhabitant feared to climb! So small wonder that his advent stirred the sleepy little island to a state of enthusiasm.

Thinking that his visitors were tip-hunters, who brought the news of some rare nest, Kennet quickly slipped on his overcoat and went out. In the faint morning light he recognised his

awakeners as two of the island men whom he had on several occasions met in the village. One of the two—Jim Gallic by name—was broad and portly, and of ferocious aspect. The other—Harry Rance—was a little white-faced wreck of a man, with a pinched nose and a nasty cough.

"Morning, sir," said the latter. "Me and Jim here reckon as we can take you to a duck hawk's nest, which maybe you'd like to photograph?"

A duck hawk! A peregrine falcon! This was luck indeed. For three years Kennet had vainly scaled the cliffs in the hope of securing a photograph of the aerie of one of these magnificent birds; but the few he had found had either proved inaccessible, or the weather had prevented him from taking the desired snapshot.

"That's good news," he said, enthusiastically. "Where is the nest?"

"Ben Inglas," Rance answered.

He said it slowly and deliberately, and watched for the effect. Kennet looked startled, then disappointed.

"Ben Inglas?" he repeated. "That's a nasty place. They tell me that none of the cliff men dare tackle it; that it's a regular snorter for treachery."

"I tackled it once," said Rance. "And me and my partner know that the nest's there. We've seen the old birds for days past."

For a moment Kennet was busy with his own thoughts.

"I am expecting my cousin by the midday boat," he said, presently. "At present I have no one to man the ropes——"

He stopped abruptly, seeing an injured smile creep over Rance's face.

"I reckon we could manage that," said the latter. "We've manned the ropes all our lives. Maybe you've heard that I was the best climber on the island before——" he patted his chest and coughed hoarsely.

Kennet pitied the poor little fellow with the awful disease that was slowly reducing him to a physical wreck. He had often heard of the man's skill and daring in better days, and he judged him to be a level-headed little fellow with nerves of iron. He glanced at the fat man's brawny arms, and concluded that the two were as capable of managing the ropes as any he could find.

Then Kennet glanced in the direction of Ben Inglas. Somehow the dizzy heights seemed to fascinate him. A true mountaineer, he had ever the craving for a higher cliff and a stiffer climb than the last, and those shadowy heights promised to fulfil his demands.

"Call again in about an hour," he said, and returned to the tent to dress and prepare breakfast.

Kennet felt sorry that it was necessary to attempt the great climb just before his cousin's arrival, for he knew how sorry Hue would be to have missed the sport. Hue was young, and vastly enthusiastic over his elder cousin's greatness as a climber. His aspirations ran in the same direction, and he considered Kennet on more or less of a level standing with the most famous sportsmen of the day. However, Kennet had too often met with disappointment through the weather of the east coast, and the uncertainty of the steamboat service, and it would have been but folly to put off, even for an hour, such a chance as this. Thus he donned his climbing shoes, slipped some fresh plates into the slides of his Reflex camera, and sat down to write a note for his cousin.

Ere the note was finished Jim and Rance returned.

"There," said Kennet, sealing the envelope, "if my cousin arrives he will know where to look for us. Now I'm ready."

Laden with the climbing kit and camera they left the camp together. Scarcely were they out of sight over the bluff when a man appeared from the deep heather close to the tent. Opening the flap he snatched up the note, and hastily took his departure.

II

AT EITHER END OF THE ROPE

BEN INGLAS was a cliff-climber's nightmare. Though Rance was reported to have once descended the cliff out of bravado three years ago, it was said that he emerged from the task—level-headed climber though he was—white-faced and trembling. Overlooking the sea from a deserted and thinly populated portion of the island, the cliffs rose a sheer four hundred feet from the white surge of the North Sea.

It was a place of wonderful grandeur, yet revealing its treachery at every ledge and crevice. In places the cliffs were rent by great seams of soft soil. Boulders of rock, bedded in the soil and appearing staple enough, were veritable death-traps. The shelves were padded with soft cushions of peat which were apt to slide away under the foot of the climber, while the greatest danger of all was from loose stones,

dislodged by the rope above, hurtling downwards and striking the unhappy victim ere he had time to swing aside.

The nearest habitation to the cliff was Marelink Hall, two miles distant, where the loved and respected lady of the island lived. A row of straggling pines screened the ancient building from view, and it was reported that the lady had no love for strangers on the island.

After a stiff climb the three men reached the brow of the cliff, and with a wave of the hand Rance indicated the place for the descent. Kennet lay at the edge and looked down. He did so with something like a sudden qualm. Four hundred feet below a flight of white gulls wheeled over the pounding surf. Birds of all varieties came and went from the treacherous shelves, busy with their domestic cares, while the sounds of their eerie cries might have graced a bedlam of evil spirits.

Breathing heavily Rance pointed out the position of the nest with a white, unsteady hand. It was about a hundred feet below, and Kennet saw that he would have to swing inwards when suspended in mid-air in order to gain the shelf, which was indicated by a jutting point of rock. Nothing daunted, however, a light crowbar was driven into the earth a few feet from the edge of the cliff. Round this the rope was twisted twice, the remainder lying in a neat coil behind the position of the two rope-men, so that it could be paid out from the bar without a hitch. At the near end of the rope was a double leather loop, through which Kennet passed one leg, drawing the second loop loosely round his waist. Then, with the camera firmly strapped on his shoulders, he ordered the men to lower away.

Somehow, as Kennet began to step backwards over the edge, he felt a strange sense of loneliness stealing upon him. A hundred times before he had trusted less responsible men than these; but, nevertheless, as he slowly lowered his life into their hands, he realised all at once that he was utterly alone with them, and that should anything happen no one was within sight or hailing distance. As he stepped over the edge, however, and disappeared from view, his fears were speedily forgotten in the thrills of climbing. He could now see the whole face of the gigantic cliff, and realised with almost a start that he had tackled a stiff undertaking.

Slowly, smoothly, the rope slipped round the bar. Not an inch of the descent must be treated lightly. Kennet scarcely noticed the yawning depths below, or heard the mad screaming of the gulls. Every stone and pebble that appeared to be loose, and that might be dislodged by the rope as he hung below, he carefully dislodged, each miniature landslip sending fresh flocks of gulls mewing and darting through the white expanse at his feet. Had there been anyone below to watch he would have appeared as a tiny insect clinging to the face of the precipice—likely at any moment to lose his hold and fall into space, as a spider falls from the ceiling.

Scarcely had Kennet descended twelve feet, however, when to his surprise the rope ceased to run out. He waited impatiently for some seconds, then chanced to look up. What he saw filled him with dread and horror.

Over the edge of the cliff directly above him he beheld the white face of the man Rance.

"The fellow's mad!" muttered the climber.

He glanced for a second towards the roaring surf below, and for the first time in his life he was giddy. Then, very deliberately, he slipped his hand into his tunic pocket, and withdrew the small revolver he carried for the purpose of signalling.

"Go back to your place," he said, firmly, levelling the weapon.

Rance gave a low laugh. It seemed that an oddly wolfish expression came into his dilated eyes.

"Don't be a fool," he answered, calmly. "What will become of you if you shoot your rope-men?"

Realising his utter helplessness, and that he was entirely at the mercy of the men above, Kennet slipped the revolver back into his pocket. As though in a dream he again heard the calm and insolent voice from above.

"We've got you beat every way, and you may as well give in. If you don't do what I tell you I shall let you drop. No one will ever know. 'Another rock-climbing tragedy'" he sneered. "'The folly of climbing unaided.' See? That note you wrote is already in our possession. Now are you game to do what we tell you?"

He patted the taut rope with his fingers, and Kennet felt it vibrate. With an effort he refrained from looking down. He ground his teeth, and stared at the white face above him.

"Fire ahead!" he hissed.

Slowly but with masterful emphasis Rance continued to speak.

"On the shelf I pointed out you'll find a small tin box wrapped round with copper wire. There ain't no duck-hawk's nest at all, so you've got to understand right away that this isn't a pleasure trip. Now bring that box

back with you, and don't waste over much time about it. Savvee?"

Kennet's mind was working like a trip-hammer. He could see no possible way out of the trap into which he had fallen. There was nothing for it at the time being but to obey promptly, and trust to luck that something might turn up.

"What if I can't find the box?" he queried.

"You've got to," came the callous response.

The white face vanished, and presently Kennet felt himself sliding downwards again with dangerous rapidity.

Every second was of value, however, and before the climber had descended fifty feet he had come to a definite decision. That decision was that, as he valued his life, he must not return with the tin box. Whatever the box contained, it was evident that foul play was afoot, and if he carried out the demands of these two desperadoes they would think as little of dropping him over the cliffs when they had done with him as they would of loosening the rope if he attempted to evade them. Fifty times sooner would he face the grim alternative of slow starvation on the face of that dreadful cliff than gratify the two treacherous scoundrels on the brow above.

Almost mechanically he groped and swung from ledge to ledge, heedless of the perils that beset him at every foot, till at last, bruised and breathless, he hung parallel with the jutting point of rock, and fired the signal for the men above to cease lowering. Slowly, giddily, he began to swing inwards, till at last with a great effort, he gained the indicated shelf. A short hunt, and the box was revealed. Kennet thrust it into his hip pocket, and two minutes later fired the signal for the rope-men to hoist.

Laboriously, foot by foot, Jim and Rance proceeded to draw in the line.

"Bet he's got it, Jim," whispered Rance, eagerly. "Heave-a-hoe!"

They applied themselves vigorously to the work, but suddenly to their horror there was the sound of a landslip far below. The rope trembled between their hands, then with a vibrating crack it slackened. Filled with apprehension Rance crept to the edge of the cliff and peered down. Far below him, on a jagged shelf at the foot of the precipice, he beheld a large pile of fallen *débris*. And beneath the pile, fluttering in the breeze, he discerned a portion of Kennet's clothing!

"Jim," he said, hoarsely, turning to face his companion, "the rope's broke!"

III

THE SEARCH FOR THE TREASURE

IT seemed for a moment to the two conspirators that the game was up. Rance, the master mind, was quick to grasp the fact that this was by no means the case. It dawned upon him that events had taken a lucky turn—for them, at any rate. It was widely improbable that anyone had witnessed the accident, and they had every reason to believe that the treasure now lay at the foot of the cliffs under the fallen *débris*.

If that was the case there was no need for further secrecy, for it was unnecessary to carry out the remainder of their villainous scheme. They would merely have to report Kennet's accident, proving their story by the evidence of the broken rope. Truly events had taken a lucky turn!

Laying aside the ropes, and taking Rance by the arm, Jim assisted him across the deserted hills to the other side of the island. It was a long walk, but fortunately they met no one on the way. In less than an hour they had arrived at Jim's cottage—a desolate little place, with a desolate little garden bordering the beach. A small gasolene dinghy lay at anchor a few yards out. The men boarded her, and, starting the engine, swung out round the naked cliffs towards Ben Inglas.

It was impossible to land during the flood tide, and for two hours they were compelled to lie at anchor at the foot of the precipice. At last Jim managed to land, and scrambling towards the heap of *débris* began to drag at the fragment of clothing.

Presently he freed it. At his feet, still attached to the leather sling, lay Kennet's jacket and a large grey stone. The tin box was not there!

Realising that they were tricked, Jim glanced up at the naked cliffs. The mighty wall seemed to scowl down at him, and the very cries of the sea birds sounded like mocking laughter in his ears.

The gentleman climber had outwitted them. Perhaps, in his panic, Jim over-estimated Kennet's abilities. He took it as a fact that already the naturalist would have succeeded in reaching the brow of the cliff, in which case the police would soon be on their track. He turned again to the dinghy.

"Rance," he said, "how much petrol have we?"

"About twelve gallons."

"Then steer west for the mainland. It's

our only chance. This place is beginning to look unhealthy."

And towards the mainland, as the evening shadows darkened, the two scoundrels steered, leaving their confederate to his fate on the island.

IV

THE TRAIL OF THE MISCREANTS

OWING to the dense fogs which were rapidly creeping seawards from the mainland, the island packet was late in arriving. It was four o'clock when the gangway was heaved upon the quay, and the sole passenger allowed to file conspicuously ashore. Dressed in a light tweed suit Hue Farland bore the *tout ensemble* of the public school boy, and he walked upwards towards the lonely moors and the distant camp with the happy prospect of a fortnight's pleasure and freedom.

Hue was naturally surprised to find that his cousin was not at camp, but concluded that Kennet was somewhere near. For three solid hours he waited, then as evening came on, and the mist from the mainland eclipsed the sunset, he became uneasy. Taking out his glasses he scanned the coastline, but could see no one—save for two men with a dinghy who were evidently hunting for shellfish at the foot of Ben Inglas. He saw the two men set out towards the bank of approaching mist, then returned to the tent.

Presently, as Hue stood at the opening, he noticed the marks of hobnailed boots on the soft, plastic earth at his feet. It was evident that the prints were new, or they would have been trodden out by Kennet, who did not wear hobnails.

"Now for a bit of scoutcraft," thought Hue, and set off at a quick walk on the trail of the hobnails. It led him straight across the deserted moor towards Ben Inglas. Presently he was certain he was on the right trail, for there at the side of the hobnails were the marks of his cousin's hemp-soled shoes. Bubbling over with the joy of his discovery the schoolboy hastened ahead.

In a rocky ravine, however, the trail vanished, but that mattered little now he had got the direction. It was a simple matter to keep to the coastline and look out for climbers.

Naturally observant, Hue did not miss the mark of the crowbar in the soft earth at the brow of Ben Inglas.

"Jove!" he muttered, "the man must have been mad who went down there!"

The next second he caught his breath in a quick gasp. There at his feet lay a climber's rope and crowbar. One end of the rope was frayed and untwisted, and the crowbar bore the initials K. F.!

Filled with apprehension, Hue stole again to the edge of the cliff, and peered down. Far below him he saw the heap of fallen *débris*, and to his horror he recognised Kennet's tunic lying on the rocks near by! Startled and bewildered, he put his hands to his mouth, and shouted. Scarcely had he done so when a white whiff of smoke curled outwards from the face of the cliff far below. Realising that his voice would never be heard above the roar of the surf and the screaming of the gulls, Hue took out his handkerchief and threw it far out over the edge. He watched it sailing downwards—smaller, smaller, and when about half-way he heard three revolver shots ring out in rapid succession.

What could it mean—Kennet's broken rope, the freshly fallen *débris* on the rocks below; and yet the three mysterious pistol shots? There was nothing for it but to investigate, and with as little delay as possible. Darkness and the bitter night chills were fast approaching, and whoever it was on the shelf below might not have strength enough to survive the night's hardships.

It would have been madness for Hue to attempt to descend the cliff alone. Running to the nearest tree, he hacked off a long branch, and attached it to the broken end of the rope so that it hung horizontally. Swiftly he lowered the branch for a hundred feet or more till he heard a single revolver shot—the signal to stop lowering. He felt a slight jerk at the rope, and knew that the climber had clasped the branch. Bracing himself up he waited for the signal to hoist—three shots—but presently he heard four shots, which meant "keep the rope tight, and look out for a fall."

Evidently the man on the shelf had seen Hue in the far-off distance, and realised that it would be impossible for one man to hoist him into safety.

Then ensued a severe tussle. Lucky for Hue he was in good trim after a strenuous term at school, and lucky for the man at the other end of the rope that he knew by experience and a strange sort of instinct which path to choose and where not to tread.

It seemed to Hue that for hours he clung desperately to the slender line, his soft hands suffering agonies by the constant strain. At last, however, he felt the rope slacken, and the

The shot struck the gasolene tank, and a tongue of fire leapt from the little boat. Then, with a gathering rush, the lighted spirit ran forward over the planks. Vainly the two men fought against the flames.

head of the climber appeared over the edge of the cliff.

"Hue!" cried Kennet.

"Kennet!" cried Hue. And they shook hands like long-lost brothers. They sat down on the green turf side by side, both done up.

"Jove! but you've got a nerve!" gasped Hue.

"You have, you mean!" panted Kennet. "I've made an awful ass of myself." He went on to explain what had happened. "I knew that the brutes meant mischief," he said, "and didn't intend obliging them. When once I had got the box it was an easy matter to undo the splicing of the rope, so that it hung by one strand. This done I attached a large stone to the sling to substitute my weight, and threw my tunic over the stone as a possible blind. Fortunately the blind acted beautifully—quite surpassed my expectations."

"But the box?" cried Hue. "What was in it?"

"That's what gave the show away," Kennet answered. He thrust his hand into his pocket, and drew out a handful of the most exquisite jewels and gold ornaments. "My pockets are stuffed with them," he continued. "Her ladyship's heirlooms, which were stolen three years ago, unless I'm much mistaken. I threw the box into the sea, with a message scratched on the lid, on the off-chance that someone would find it. But"—he looked up at Hue—"I'm glad you had a hand in it, old chap," he said. "It's been the greatest climb of my life."

Then the night came on suddenly—a dense sheet of blackness rising like a wall around them. Kennet took out his compass, which he carried in case of such an emergency.

"Keep close to me," he advised. "There's no time to waste if we wish to catch that lovable pair—Ronnie and his pal Jim."

"They made towards the mainland," said Hue. "I saw them."

"So did I. Directly they were out of sight I lit the signal fire. This way. We'll go to the Hall first, and deposit these jewels where they will be safe."

So dense was the fog, however, that it was no easy matter to find the Hall. After an eternity of groping and stumbling over the moors, Kennet rolled into a ditch which they took to be the ancient moat. Still stumbling they forced their way through a thick yew hedge, and gained the soft turf of a side lawn. Finally they almost collided with an outstanding wing of the building, and groping along the wall at last came to a door, which happened to be the door of the pump-house.

They knocked several times, but no answer came. Seeing a faint light in an adjacent chamber they went in. There at a small table with his back towards them sat an elderly man, who from his dress was a domestic servant. He was evidently quite deaf, for as the two approached behind him he neither moved nor looked up.

Glancing over the man's shoulder Kennet drew his revolver. Hue tiptoed to the door and turned the key. The servant was still oblivious of their presence till Kennet, with a quick movement, snatched the note he was reading from his hand.

"So you've got a finger in the pie, have you?" hissed the gentleman climber. "We were just wondering who it was that prigged that note I left for my cousin."

The man began to expostulate wildly, but the sight of the little revolver quite took the wind out of his sails. The lifeline came in useful. Having first interviewed the lady of the house, the servant was locked in an empty safe till it was convenient to transport him elsewhere.

V

RANCE AT BAY

NEXT Kennet and Hue hurried to the village constabulary. Sergeant Wills and Constable Tott managed to keep a calm exterior when they heard the story. Yes, the fastest boat in the cove belonged to her ladyship—a sleek fifty-foot gasolene, with three sets of engines and propellers to match.

"We want a good man to run her," said Wills. "The fog seems to be lifting, and we may have squalls."

"I think we can manage that all right," answered Kennet. "I've done a bit of yachting myself, and my friend here understands motors."

That was fortunate, as the sleepy islanders would not be very keen on taking a hand in the matter. The telegraph was called into operation, and the news flashed across to the mainland. By the time the little party had gained the *Black Arrow*—a magnificent launch, built for speed, but capable of safely riding quite a considerable sea—the mist had lifted, and a soft breeze was fanning in from the west.

The three engines were set in motion, and with a roar the *Black Arrow* swept out of the cove, leaving a seething pathway of foam in

her wake. Kennet, with his compass handy, stood at the wheel, while Hue coaxed the engines with judicious doses of oil and delicate handling of the levers. Far in the distance a lightship flashed its rays into the heavens, and towards this distant beacon Kennet kept the launch headed. The swell increased slightly, and they were forced to slacken speed for fear of driving her under. On they sped, mile after mile; at last the distant light became visible—the ship itself, swinging lazily on the swell. They passed quite close to her, and now they could see the lights of the mainland high in the heavens ahead. Forty minutes passed by.

"It strikes me it's a wild-goose chase," shouted Kennet at last. "They probably lost themselves in the fog, and are miles out of their course."

"Listen!" bellowed Constable Tott.

Hue slacked the engines down to a gentle purr. They listened intently. Somewhere in the dark expanse they could hear the noisy splutter of a low-powered engine, which was "missing" badly.

"That's him!" whispered Tott. "Away to starbo'd."

Kennet flung over the wheel, and the boat rolled giddily as she came round broadside with the swell.

The sound of the distant engine became fainter, and presently ceased. Rance and Jim had evidently heard the approach of the powerful boat and stopped their engine.

During the next ten minutes the *Black Arrow*, with dripping freeboard, cut every letter of the alphabet except the letter "I." In the swell, however, they might have passed within a few yards of the little squat boat without perceiving her. Suddenly, however, there sounded a sharp crack from somewhere near, and the wind-screen shivered to fragments within a foot of the helmsman's face.

"Out with the lights!" shouted Sergeant Wills. "The beggars are shooting at us! Best try to run them down, Mr. Farland."

Ere they had time to extinguish the lamps, however, a second bullet ricochetted across the water and crashed into the hull. Kennet saw the blue tongue of flame, and threw round the bows straight towards it. Again the men in the dinghy fired—fired in such rapid succession that to the party in the launch the discharge sounded like one continuous roar. Bullets whistled and tore through the canopy—one hit a sparking-plug and broke it to fragments.

Well Kennet knew what the roar meant. It meant that they were face to face with a powerful automatic pistol, in the hand of a man who knew how to use it. It would be madness—unnecessary madness—to face that deadly discharge.

With roaring exhausts the *Black Arrow* raced round the tiny dinghy in a wide circle. Wills shouted to Rance through the megaphone, warning him to abandon resistance, and pointing out the helplessness of their position. Another deadly discharge, which sent the crew of the *Black Arrow* grovelling in the bottom of the boat, came as answer to the message.

Then Kennet drew out his little revolver. Steadying it against his arm he aimed carefully—not at the occupants, but at the gasolene tank, and by a lucky chance he hit it.

A minute later a tongue of fire leapt up from the little boat. With a gathering rush the lighted spirit ran forward over the planks. Slowly, but with dreadful certainty, it crept along the gunwales, spreading aft, and in forty seconds the tiny craft was a veritable fire-boat.

The men in the launch saw Rance and Jim vainly endeavouring to fight the fire with their caps. It was like fighting an army of ants, and, forced to give in, they threw up their arms and sprang overboard. Jim, who was but a poor swimmer, was only too glad to be rescued, though some minutes elapsed before they succeeded in laying hold of Rance. The two were promptly handcuffed, and the *Black Arrow* swung her bows westward, homeward bound.

There is little more to tell. When three years previously the sleepy little island of Marekirk was rudely awakened from its hibernation by the news that her ladyship's jewels were missing, the parson voiced the general opinion of his people when he gravely stated that a stranger had trespassed within his fold. No one suspected the peace-loving islanders of the crime, and of all persons on earth her ladyship's sleek and dutiful butler was above suspicion. At the trial, however, the full story came out. Rance, acting as spokesman, explained how, by a clever ruse, the butler had procured the heirlooms. He explained how he—a strong man in those days—had, when harassed by the police, made the descent of Ben Inglas with Jim's assistance, where he deposited the treasure till such time as it was safe to redeem it. In order to keep the natives away from the place, he had never proved loth to dwell upon the perils of the cliff.

"The following winter," said Rance, "a bad attack of bronchitis almost laid me out.

Then came the chest trouble"—he patted his chest and looked appealingly at the judge. "My partners waited for me to get better, but I got worse and worse. Only I could redeem the jewels, but a man must be in sound condition to attempt Ben Inglas. We could hope for no assistance from our neighbours, who are loyal to her ladyship. There is not a man on the island who could safely climb that cliff to-day—save for one. When Mr. Farland arrived we were just about desperate, and we took advantage of him at the first opportunity.

"Then, when I saw that the game was up, I tried to disable the launch, but they disabled its instead. I had nothing to lose, but my partners had everything in the world to win. It didn't matter much to me what happened ——" But here a fit of coughing cut him short.

When her ladyship got up to speak she begged that Rance—though doubtless a desperate character—should be spared the toil and hardships of the ordinary convict. He was a sick man, and she pleaded that he should be treated with compassion. Her merciful request was granted, though the three were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

And Kennet and Hue, naturally elated over their success, achieved by way of reward one of earth's choicest gifts—the thanks and lasting friendship of a kind and gracious lady.

THE DAY'S GOOD DEED

Old Gentleman: "Can you tell me the nearest way to the Vicarage, my lad?"

The Zulu-ish Scout: "Yes, sir. Go a little way up the road and you'll find a way in the hedge. Crawl through that, cross the ploughed field—it's rather muddy—get over the fence, and cut through the copse—you'll know the track by the footprints and broken twigs—creep along down by the side of ——"

(But the old gentleman did not wait for more.)

THE CAPTAIN CAMERA CORNER

IN previous issues I have said a great deal from time to time about P.O.P. printing, but not enough, I fear, about the rival process—bromide printing. P.O.P. has advantages of its own, the chief being that one can control the printing because it is a visible process. This advantage is, no doubt, largely responsible for the popularity of this printing method among amateurs.

Yet anybody who has "got the hang" of bromide printing is not anxious to use P.O.P. where it can be avoided, because bromide printing has some very strong points in its favour. In the first place, it can be carried on at night just as well as by day, and so is particularly handy to people whose days are pretty well occupied with more serious business; in the second, it is vastly quicker than the P.O.P. process; in the third, it gives more artistic results than P.O.P., and at its best its effects come very near to those of platinum paper; in the fourth, the image is very permanent if the final washing is done thoroughly.

BROMIDE PAPER FOR SPEED

But probably the speed with which one can turn off a lot of prints, especially if they are all made from the same negative, is bromide paper's greatest charm. At least, that's how the case presents itself to me, as I never cared for printing of any kind for printing's sake. Twice last year I had reason to bless bromide paper during the hot spell. On the first occasion it was a matter of making a couple of dozen prints of a family group. Who wanted to mess about with printing frames when the thermometer stood near 100degs. in the shade! I didn't, for one; so I bought up a sufficiency of paper and chemicals, and turned the lot off "at one go" an hour or two after Phœbus had retired to roost. Next morning the prints were all in the post. Shortly afterwards a friend about to return to New Zealand after a visit to England wanted prints from three dozen of my "snaps" to take back with him. Three or four hours' work put the business through, and a very nice lot of prints went to the Antipodes. Of course, this rate of working is nothing to that of the professionals who haunt festive functions, take a flashlight of you just after the sweets, and serve up a framed print before the speeches have got fairly under way—bromide paper again!

By the bye, I had almost overlooked a very important point concerning the process—that it is indispensable for getting enlarged prints by projection.

COST OF BROMIDE PAPER

Reckoned by the sheet, bromide paper is dearer than P.O.P. But it is, I think, cheaper in the long run. How many P.O.P.'s have I left unwittingly to blacken while chasing the nimble tennis ball, or urging my less nimble pen? And how many have you, many a time, my reader? Now, with bromide paper—though one may have to be careful at the start—when the exposure has once been found the repetition of a good print is the simplest and surest thing imaginable. So that, taking it all round, one gets a much higher percentage of usable prints out of a given number of pieces of printing paper.

Note.—Bromide paper curls slightly at the edges in the direction of the film side. If the curl is too slight to be decisive, wet the tips of two fingers and take hold of the paper at a corner. The side to which a finger sticks is the film side.

KINDS OF BROMIDE PAPER

Bromide paper varies, as regards its rapidity, from the very slow paper which can be safely developed in dim gaslight (or lamplight), reflected from walls and ceilings, to the rapid paper which needs an orange screen between it and the dark-room illuminant. It is impossible to say where the slow papers end and the rapid ones begin, as there are many grades. But most of the big makers supply "slows," which are much slower than their "fasts"; so if you get both kinds from the same firm you may be sure that *relatively* they will act up to their names.

It is useful to know that many weak negatives, that is, negatives in which there is little difference in opacity between the lights and the

shadows, and which are almost useless for P.O.P. work, may be made to yield quite satisfactory prints on a *slow* bromide paper; while, on the other hand, strong negatives with harsh contrasts will behave quite well if a *fast* bromide paper is used. Just a word of caution here: Don't confuse "weak" and "strong" with "thin" and "dense." A thin negative may have good contrast; and a dense negative poor contrast. Denseness, or its opposite, is primarily a matter of length of development; contrast, or its opposite, a matter of exposure.

This last paragraph should afford some comfort to the owner of a number of weak negatives which absolutely refuse to give respectable P.O.P. prints. Let him try them on slow bromide paper before setting them down as hopeless.

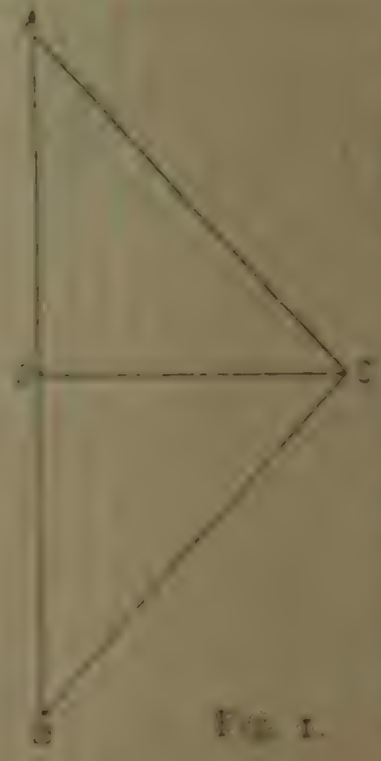

Fig. 1.

ILLUMINANTS FOR EXPOSURE

I am concerned here only with contact prints made in the printing frame.

To get correct exposures it is essential to use an illuminant of as constant a power as possible. By this I mean an illuminant which may be relied on to give approximately the same strength of lighting at all times. Daylight is essentially unsatisfactory for bromide printing, owing to its fluctuations, and rapid weakening towards nightfall. In fact, unless an actinometer be used, it is impossible to keep the exposures correct over a number of hours.

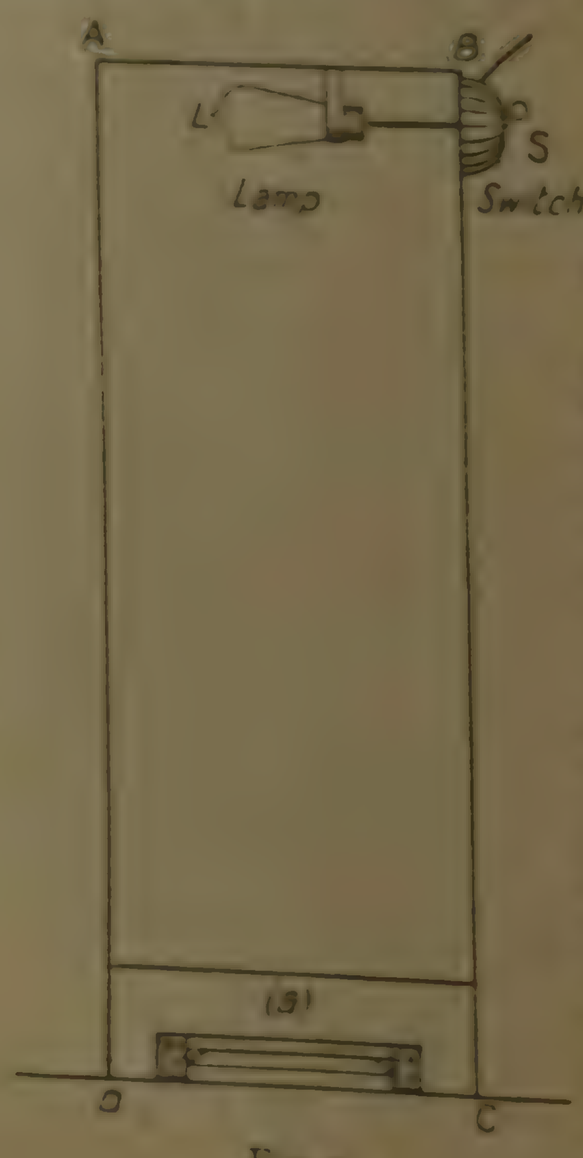

Fig. 2.

If on the other hand electric light, gaslight, or even lamplight be used, and a standard printing distance between illuminant and negative be adhered to, when the correct exposure for any given negative has once been found it can be repeated an indefinite number of times.

DISTANCE BETWEEN FRAME AND ILLUMINANT

In Fig. 1 C represents the illuminant, A B the negative, and C D the perpendicular distance between the two. You will recognise at once that the distances A C, B C are greater than C D; and that the nearer A B is brought to C the greater will the disparity be, while the further back A B is set the more nearly are all the lengths levelled up. Now, as the strength of illumination is proportionate, not to the distance, but to the *square* of the distance, it is very important to get C D fairly equal to A C,

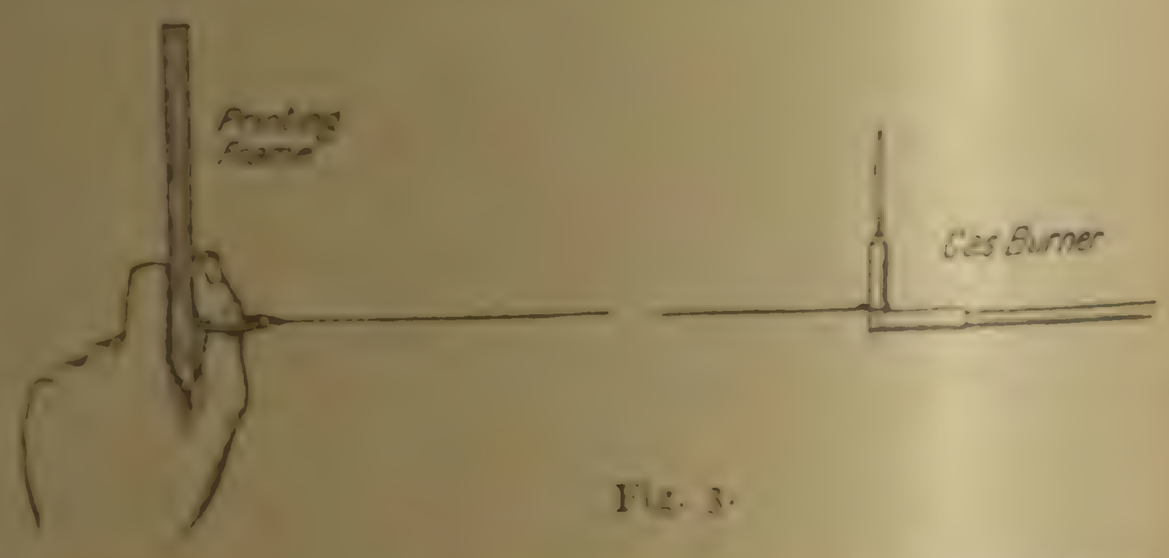

Fig. 3.

B C. One may select as standard distance that equal to three times the diagonal measurement of the largest plate habitually used. As comparatively few amateurs go in for larger sizes than half-plate let us put the distance down at two feet. Please understand that there is absolutely no objection to greater distances, excepting in so far as they increase the time of exposure.

AN EXPOSURE BOX

If electric light is available it will be worth while to rig up the apparatus shown in Fig. 2.

A B C D is a box rather more than 2ft. long, with part of one side removed at *a*, to allow the introduction of the printing frame. The

A	B	C	D
5 secs	5·5 secs.	5·5·5 secs	5·5·5·5 secs

Fig. 4.

inside is lined with white paper to reflect and diffuse light not falling directly on the frame, thereby lessening the time of exposure. A lamp, L, is fixed inside near the top, and a switch, S, is provided outside, so that the light may be turned on or off at will.

To make an exposure one has merely to

the printing frame, negative upwards, into the box and switch on the light for the requisite period, at the end of which it is switched off again. For working with gas tie a piece of string to the burner or the wall to give the correct distance when the string is fully extended by the hand holding the printing frame (Fig. 3). In the case of an oil lamp it is merely necessary

Old-fashioned post mill with two sails. The whole mill revolves on the coned base, and is trimmed to the wind by hand.

to arrange a vertical support on the table at the proper exposure distance away from the lamp.

THE EXPOSURE

It is impossible to lay down rules for exposure, as the time is governed by the quality and density of the negative. A pyro-stained negative, again, will, other things being equal, require considerably longer exposure than a quite clean one. If the negative is one from which several prints will be taken, it is advisable to make a trial exposure with a strip of paper. If the result is not satisfactory—that is, development is too slow or too rapid—try another, placing the second strip in approximately the same place as the first; and, if necessary, repeat the process until you are satisfied. Another method is to use a full-sized piece of paper and expose it by stages, as shown in Fig. 4. If the unit of exposure is, say, five seconds, strip D will get twenty, strip C fifteen, strip B ten, and strip A 5 seconds exposure. Develop for two minutes, wash, and fix. You will then be in a position to decide what exposure is likely to give the best results with that period of development. If your decision is justified by the prints write the number of seconds in ink on one corner of the negative with the letter F or S before it to denote whether fast or slow paper was used for the test.

DEVELOPMENT

It is advisable to stick to one make of paper as far as possible, and to use the development formula recommended for that paper, as this formula, you may be sure, is the result of careful experiment. Also follow out the instructions given with regard to washing and fixing. Some papers should be transferred straight from the developing to the fixing bath without preliminary washing, others be rinsed before transference.

It is a safe rule to soak the paper before pouring on the developer, as the soaking prevents uneven flowing and the formation of air-bells—which respectively mean streaky marks and white spots on the print.

As one needs sufficient developer to cover the print well, yet it is unwise to use the same developer over and over again, the following procedure is advisable: Take, say, a couple of ounces of the fresh solution for a half-plate print. After developing the print return the solution to the beaker, pour away half an ounce of it, and add a similar quantity of fresh solution. This will keep the standard pretty even throughout, while avoiding waste.

As the print generally "comes back" a bit in the fixing bath, carry on development slightly further than seems necessary. Faults in development can fortunately be corrected to a great

Post mill with four sweeps.

extent by later processes; but proper development in the first instance saves much time and trouble.

FIXING

Leave your prints in the fixing bath—which should be used *fresh* for each batch of prints—for a good long time, say, ten minutes. Under-fixation means the future ruin of the print by

the appearance of brownish splotches and streaks. Keep the prints moving, so that they shall not stick to one another.

When a dozen half-plate prints, or two dozen quarter-plate, have been fixed in half a pint of solution, throw the solution away, and use a

Post mill trimmed automatically by fantail gearing.

fresh lot for later prints. On no account use solution which has done work and been exposed to the air for a day or two.

WASHING

Wash the prints as thoroughly as you would wash negatives, drain them, and suspend them by clips from lines, or, after removing the surface moisture with fluffless blotting-paper, lay them face upwards on some clean paper to dry.

I must reserve remarks on the after-treatment of bromide paper for a later occasion, as the subject could not be treated adequately here.

THE WATCHFUL EYE

All amateur photographers pass through pretty much the same stages, I suppose. There is the portrait-taking stage, which requires the whole household, down to the dog or cat, to sit while a shot is made at them. Then comes the wandering-around stage, which expends films or plates on every local object of interest —in many cases very uninteresting.

I believe that the secret of retaining one's interest in photography is bound up with trying to get good *series* of photographs. If you make up your mind that you want to secure as many photographic examples as possible of, say, church porches, village crosses, historic buildings, entrance gates, sundials, and so on, and lose no chances of adding to your collection, you will soon have quite a useful assortment.

The folding camera for films is a great boon to the collector, being so light that it can be taken along on occasions when the bulkier, heavier plate camera would be left at home. Last summer I took a Kodak with me on tour and made some dozens of exposures, selecting in every case an object really worth a film, either for its own sake or as helping to extend a series of similar objects. As a result I obtained a lot of negatives which to me, at any rate, have a permanent value far exceeding that of multitudes of common or garden snaps made in times past at seaside and other resorts.

Among other things I have started specialising in windmills, a class of machine which, in its more massive forms, is gradually disappearing

Tower mill, of which only the top part revolves to bring the sweeps to the wind.

from our hill-tops. A series of four, all differing in detail, is reproduced in these pages. They were the takings of one morning's ride in Essex. If I hadn't had my camera with me at the time, I should have lost some good chances.

By HAROLD AVERY

I

"CLANG - CLANG - TER - RANG - TERANG!"

In No. 12 dormitory the first note of the bell was immediately followed by a wild upheaval of bed-clothing, there was a hurried pattering of naked feet, a jarring of crockery as if someone had come into collision with a washstand, and a plaintive exclamation of, "Oh, my toe!"

"Second after you, Griffin!" exclaimed a voice. "Bags after you, Merton!" panted another.

A man-servant appeared with a lighted taper, lit the gas, and went out, closing the door behind him with a slam.

The sound seemed to have a rousing effect on a boy who had hitherto remained curled up in a bed in a corner of the room. He sat up, rubbing his eyes.

"What's the good of routing fellows out in the middle of the night?" he grumbled, the speech ending in a prodigious yawn.

"All right, Burdock, you needn't excite yourself," remarked Merton, who was searching for his socks. "You're after Capster. So you can lie down and go to sleep again."

"Oh, bother!" muttered Burdock, and flung himself back on his pillow.

"No. 12" was a small room at the end of one of the top landings at Shepwick School; and, space being limited, there were three washstands to six beds, a state of affairs which led to an unwritten law that the boys who first grabbed hold of a basin after the getting-up bell had commenced to ring were entitled to the privilege of "first wash." There was really no hardship about this agreement provided that those entitled to "first innings" were reasonably prompt in performing their ablutions. Twenty minutes was the period allowed for dressing, which afforded ample time for every boy to escape being late for prayers.

On this dark February morning Griffin and Merton were soon at their respective basins; Capster, however, who had established a claim to the vacant washstand, calmly crawled back into bed again, and drew the clothes up level with his chin. Like the rest of his room-mates he belonged to the Lower Fourth, and had the questionable distinction of being a good bit bigger than any other member of the Form. His seemed a case where mental development did not seem to have kept pace with bodily growth.

"Get your pads on, whoever's in next!" sputtered Griffin, preparing for a final swill.

"I say, hurry up, Capster!" expostulated Burdock.

"Shut up, Burdy," was the reply. "Get a clothes-brush, and give yourself a 'dry clean' over there by the door."

Burdock refused to try the experiment thus suggested.

"How d'you suppose I'm to get dressed in time if you stay there all day?" he grumbled.

"I don't suppose anything," answered Capster. "What I'd like to know is how you suppose a man can conceal secret documents in his stomach, and someone come along and find them there."

The inquiry had reference to a slip which Burdock had made in the previous day's history lesson, and over which he had already been roasted nearly to death by the last speaker.

"Oh, drop that, do; I'm sick of it! You know I never said anything of the kind."

"You did! You said Titus Oates hid some documents in his tub."

"I *didn't!*" almost shouted Burdock. "The question was about the Meal Tub Plot, and I made a mistake and said the documents were hidden in a tub of oats instead of a tub of meal."

"In Titus's tub. That's just what I've been saying."

"Get away! I tell you I said 'oats' instead

of "meal." I'd got the two plots mixed up in my mind."

"Oatmeal! That's what you've got mixed up inside your head. Your skull's full of porridge instead of brains."

Burdock attempted to reply, while Capster baffled and repulsed him by saying "Oatmeal" over and over again in a monotonous tone which at last proved almost maddening. "Oatmeal—oatmeal—oatmeal——" The wrangle continued until two more boys, Pike and Holne, had nearly finished washing.

Eventually Capster saw fit to think about dressing, while Burdock had to content himself by coming third after Pike, and subsequently performing the last part of a hasty toilet as he descended the stairs. There is a type of bullying which, even in the best-regulated schools, is difficult to suppress, and which, while never going so far as actual violence, is not the less painful to endure. Some kink in Capster's nature caused him to delight in making things unpleasant for any of his comrades who were not capable of retaliation. He was particularly given to a form of spiteful nagging; and, having conceived the happy idea of christening Burdock "Oatmeal," continued to badger him with the epithet at every possible moment, and incite other fellows to do the same. It was a wretched morning, wet and foggy; and, unable to escape from his tormentor by going out of doors, Burdock hailed the bell for school with a sigh of relief.

Since the middle of the previous winter term Capster appeared to have singled out Burdock as an easy victim, but during the day which followed the squabble in the dormitory this persecution was indulged in more persistently than ever. It seemed almost as if Capster had become possessed with some spirit of malice. An empty jam-pot was hurled into Burdock's play-box, smashing half his birds'-eggs; a tilted ink-well was jerked out of its socket with disastrous results as he sat writing a letter.

"Look here—I've had enough of your humbug!' cried Burdock, almost giving way to tears on discovering that a rivulet of ink had invaded the pockets of a cherished writing-case.

"Why don't you leave me alone?"

"Did 'ums, den?" replied Capster. "Mustn't get in a temper. Oatmeal's heating to the blood; I'll give you time to cool down."

If this could be regarded as the promise of a truce it was soon broken. On whole school-days during the spring term work began at four o'clock, and continued till tea-time. At five o'clock a fresh subject caused a change of masters in the Lower Fourth, and, as Mr. Layfield left the room, a murmur of conversation showed that, for a few moments, discipline was relaxed. Seated at the back desk Burdock produced from his pocket a dart made out of an old pen-holder and a darning-needle, and, paying no attention to what was going on around him, proceeded to fix a new paper feather in the slits made for its reception. Suddenly Capster, who was lolling on the bench in front, turned sharply round, and snatched away the missile.

"Hullo, Oatmeal; don't you know that the Head has made a rule that these things aren't to be used by anyone?"

"Shut up! Give it back, can't you?"

Paying no heed to the request, Capster swung round, rose to his feet, and flung the dart up the room; it struck the very centre of the blackboard, and remained there quivering, with its point firmly embedded in the wood.

With an ejaculation of mingled wrath and dismay Burdock sprang from his seat, and rushed up the aisle between the desks. He was quite aware of the fact that darts were forbidden at Shepwick, since a dangerous practice had been indulged in of flinging them up to the roof of the Big School, where they stuck, likely at any time to fall unexpectedly on the head of any unfortunate youth who happened to be sitting or standing in the exact line of descent. There was no time to be lost, as Mr. Johns might be expected to enter the room at any moment. Burdock seized the dart, plucked it out of the blackboard, and commenced a headlong rush back to his seat. Then it was that Capster deliberately stuck out his foot; there was a crash, and the wretched Oatmeal went down with almost sufficient force to deprive him of his senses.

"What are you doing there, Burdock? You've no business to be out of your place. I shall put your name down for extra drill."

Mr. Johns, who had paused for a moment in the act of entering the class-room, moved forward again, and laid his mark-book and papers on the official desk.

Flushed with rage and indignation Burdock could offer no excuse; to have explained what had happened might have resulted in his being reported to the Head as the maker and owner of the strictly forbidden dart. Capster seemed to regard the matter as a huge joke.

"You *are* an idiot!" he whispered back over his shoulder. "Why don't you look where you're going?"

All through the last hour of afternoon school

the victim sat nursing his wrath ; when the lesson ended the marks awarded him were thirty-five out of a hundred. Vague thoughts of rounding on his persecutor drifted through his mind. It was impossible to go on enduring this sort of thing for weeks and months.

At Shepwick it was customary for boys to put on their slippers during the interval between tea and the commencement of prep. As luck would have it the last two fellows to enter the boot-room were Capster and Burdock.

"It was all your fault Johns sticking me down for extra drill," began the latter, unable to refrain from giving vent to his feelings. "It was just one of your dirty tricks to chuck that dart at the blackboard, and then trip me up. You did it on purpose to get me into a row."

"My fault! You duffer, you never looked where you were going, and you nearly kicked my foot off. There'll be a bruise on it for days. Look here, Oatmeal, you've been in a vile temper all day. What's the matter with you? Put out your tongue, and let me have a look at it."

"Oh, shut up! Why can't you leave me alone?"

"You've been swallowing more medicuments, and your tub's out of order," retorted Capster, as he began unlacing his boots. "You want a blue pill, that's my opinion. Wait a jiffy, and I'll have a look at your tongue."

Burdock was in no mood for more ragging ; had he been built of sterner stuff he might have

Capster swung round, rose to his feet, and flung the dart up the room. It struck the very centre of the blackboard, and remained there quivering.

hurled his boots at his companion's head ; as it was, he hastily dragged on his slippers, and made for the door. A moment later Capster

started in pursuit. The fugitive attempted to escape by diving into a class-room which was only used during school hours; but he was not quite quick enough to throw his pursuer off the scent. The latter contented himself with pulling the door to, and locking it on the outside.

"All right, my boy," he called out, "there you can stop!"

II

With a pleasant sense of "something attempted, something done" Capster strolled off, and, meeting a fellow with whom he had promised to exchange some foreign stamps, continued haggling over the bargain till the bell began to ring for evening prep. It was not until he was in the act of taking his books out of his locker that he suddenly remembered his prisoner.

"Botheration!" muttered Capster to himself. "I must let the young beggar out, or there'll be a row."

Without a moment's delay he ran along the passage, down a short flight of stairs, and so came to the locked door. He turned the key, and entered the room.

"Look sharp, Oatmeal, or you'll be late for prep."

There was no reply. The room was in darkness, and Capster's first thought was that the captive was too sulky to reply; then a draught of cold air made him aware of the fact that one of the windows was open.

"Oh, so he's got out that way."

Capster lingered just long enough to grope his way quickly round the room to make sure that the prisoner was not there; then, with his books under his arm, he hastened off to the Big School, arriving just in time to take his place before the master on duty entered, and closed the door. In the ranks of the Lower Fourth there was still a desk vacant.

"Hullo! Where's he got to, I wonder?" thought Capster.

He opened his books, but for a time found it impossible to give proper attention to his work. The class-room window was within a few feet of the ground, and it was impossible for Burdock to have met with an accident in getting out. The door which formed the boys' entrance to the school would have been locked; but he could surely have slipped into the building some other way. Even if he had been caught and questioned by one of the masters it would merely have meant his name being taken, and would not have kept him out of prep.

By some whim of fate Burdock's absence seemed destined to escape notice. The master on duty did not put the usual question, "Who's away here?" and when the day ended with the final roll-call after prayers, some boy accidentally answering out of his turn caused the prefect to mark the absentee as present. It was not until the occupants of No. 12 assembled in the dormitory that the first inquiry was made.

"I say, what's become of Burdock?" asked Griffin. "He wasn't in prep."

The strange disappearance of his prisoner was beginning to cause a vague sense of uneasiness in Capster's mind.

"I can tell you something about him," he began. "He got out through the window of Mason's class-room. I was having a bit of a lark with him after tea, and locked him in."

In a few words the speaker proceeded to recount what had happened.

"The beggar can't have fallen and broken his leg, I suppose?" suggested Merton.

"Bosh! Of course not. There's no distance to fall. It's as easy to get out of that window as to step off this bed."

"D'you think he went round and complained to the Head?"

"No fear! He may be an ass, but not such a sneak as all that. Besides, it was only a lark. I never laid a finger on him. What's more, the Head wouldn't have kept him yarning away all the evening."

A few more suggestions were made, then the master on duty, going his round to extinguish the lights, appeared on the scene. He seemed in a hurry. "All right here?" he inquired, abruptly, and turned the tap of the gas-jet. Burdock's bed was in the corner behind the door, and once again, by that odd freak of fortune, his absence was not noticed.

"I say! We ought to have told Layfield that there was one chap away," remarked Griffin, as the sound of retreating footsteps died away down the corridor.

"What for?" snapped Capster. "He didn't ask; he merely said, 'All right here?'"

The other four boys, however, did not seem satisfied. For half an hour they lay awake, expecting Burdock to come to bed, and occasionally hazarding a guess as to his whereabouts.

"I'll tell you what I think has happened to him," blurted out Griffin, after a brief period of silence. "I wouldn't mind betting a penny that he's hooked it."

"What!" exclaimed Pike, Merton, and Hall in the same breath.

"Run away," continued the other. "His home's at Abbot's Hill, only three stations

and he'd have been in plenty of time to catch a train."

"What rot you're talking!" burst out Capster, angrily. "What earthly reason could there be for the fellow to take it into his head to do such a mad thing as that?"

"Well, if he has gone I should say it's your doing, Capster," returned Griffin, spiritedly. "You've been bully-ragging the fellow all day."

"What a lie!"

"No, it's not!" put in Merton. "You're always rotting him; you know you are. I remember now I heard him say that he was getting just about fed up with it."

"If the chap has slung his hook," muttered Pike, "then we shall get into a fine old row to-morrow for not telling Layfield he hadn't come to bed."

All at once the unwelcome prospect of possible trouble in store seemed to dawn on the minds of those concerned, and this supplied what might be termed the motive power for what followed. The boys in No. 12 were getting sick of Capster's tyranny, though hitherto they had never thought of anything in the shape of organised opposition. Though they scarcely realised it, the train was laid, and a few moments later the match fell on the powder.

"Why couldn't you leave the fellow alone?" growled Griffin. "It'll be your fault, Capster, if we all get in a bother. The Head'll think we knew he was gone, and kept it dark purposely."

"You fool!" cried Capster, angrily. "Just shut up!"

He leant out of bed, found a slipper, and hurled it in the direction of the last speaker. In the darkness it went wide of the mark; but an instant later it came back, and this time with truer aim.

"All right, Griffin—I'll give you a jolly good licking."

Until the moment came for action no thought of what was going to happen existed in the minds of the occupants of No. 12. Capster rose, and groped his way across the floor to Griffin's bed. The boy thus attacked made no appeal for help, but some heroic spirit of revolt suddenly inflamed the breasts of his three comrades. They scrambled out of bed, and rushed to his aid. A moment later Capster felt an arm round his throat, and someone hanging on his back. He struck out savagely; one of his blows made Merton's head ring, then the whole pack were on him. Over they all went with a prodigious thump on the floor. There was a struggle, followed by a brief silence, broken by the sound of heavy breathing.

"Let me up," panted Capster.

"Find this a bit uncomfy, eh?" gasped Merton, whose ear felt as if it were swelling to twice its normal size. "Well, just listen to me, my boy; we've got you down once, and if you don't take care what you're about we'll have you down again, jolly quick; and when that happens you won't be let off so easily."

There was a moment of suspense as the vanquished foe was allowed to rise. His opponents half expected that a battle royal would begin at once; but the fighting spirit was not strong in Capster. He thought it best to accept defeat, and slunk back to bed, muttering vague threats as to what would happen when it was light, and he could see what he was doing.

"You won't try that on again," he growled.

"Won't we?" was the prompt and cheerful reply.

For the time being the excitement consequent on this unexpected victory caused Burdock's mysterious disappearance to be forgotten. In the morning, however, it was remembered, though not before a trifling incident had occurred to emphasise the downfall of Capster. As usual he chose to lie on in bed after having secured "first wash," but this time Pike calmly took possession of the vacant basin.

"Here! What are you doing?" called out Capster. "That's mine!"

"If you don't choose to get up, you can wait till I've finished," was the reply.

Capster became aware of an ominous silence that had fallen on the room, as if the other four boys were waiting to see if he meant to accept the challenge; but, though the gas was lit, and he no longer had the excuse of not being able to see what he was doing, he merely grunted, and turned over on his side. His reign was ended.

"I say!" exclaimed Pike, suddenly, as he caught sight of the vacant bed, "Burdock's never turned up!"

"Not he!" growled Griffin. "As I said last night, my belief is he's hooked it."

The morning was fine, and after breakfast everyone turned out for a breath of fresh air before school-time; a group of four boys, however, lingered in the Lower Fourth classroom. An anxious look was visible on their faces.

"What can have become of the beggar?" remarked Merton. "Layfield asked where he was in morning school, so the Head'll be on

his track soon. He can't have run away; he'd never have done such a mad thing as that."

"I don't know," said Griffin, gloomily. "That beast Capster was always badgering him from morning to night, and making life a misery to him."

"What I'd like you to tell me," began Holne, "is, what we're going to say when the Head asks us why we didn't tell Layfield the chap wasn't in the dormitory last night. That's where we come in."

"Do you think we'd better go and tell the Head now?" suggested Pike, rather feebly.

There was a pause; no one seemed in favour of this last proposition. For some moments the four boys stood regarding one another in gloomy silence, then, as if the whole thing were a stage farce, the door opened, and Burdock himself calmly walked into the room.

"Good night! You beggar, where have you been?"

"In the sick-room."

"The sick-room!" exclaimed Griffin. "Did you hurt yourself? Did you fall out of the window?"

"Don't know what you mean," answered Burdock. "It was rather a lark. That silly ass Capster locked me in Mason's class-room last night before prep. After he'd gone the porter came along, heard me rattling the door, and let me out."

"But it was locked when Capster went back," interposed Pike.

"I know. The door's always supposed to be kept locked out of school hours, and old Joe turned the key. I went on up into the matron's room, to ask if she could give me something for my cold. While I was there the Head came in, and insisted on having a look at me. He thought I'd got a rash coming out, and I suppose he imagined I was sickening for something; anyway, he told me not to go into prep., but to get my night things, and go off to the sick-room. He came and overhauled me just after breakfast, owned up he was mistaken, and told me I could go back into school."

"Well, I'm blessed!" ejaculated Griffin. "We've been in no end of a stew about you; we thought you'd run away!"

Hardly had the words been spoken when Capster walked into the class-room. He halted, and surveyed the group with a look of blank astonishment.

"Hullo, Oatmeal!" he exclaimed. "You young bounder, where have you been?"

It was Griffin who took it upon himself to reply.

"Look here, Capster," he began. "We've had enough of that joke of yours about the Meal Tub Plot, so you can just give it a rest. What's more, if you start ragging this chap again you'll get what you got in the dormitory, only a bit more so. See?"

To Burdock's amazement Capster apparently did see. He laughed in rather a mirthless way, and a moment later strolled out of the room. No further evidence was needed to proclaim the fact that the revolt in No. 12 had proved a complete success.

THE END.

A HINT TO PARLOUR JUGGLERS

Don't be content with an easy feat of balancing like this

But go in for something a shade more difficult—for example, this

FINE NEW ADVENTURE SERIAL

WHITE MAN'S GOLD

A Splendid Story of a Search for Vast Fortune in the Heart of Brazil

By FREDERICK WATSON

CHAPTER I

THE CRY FROM THE BEACH

THE summer term at Charterhouse was over when I, Alan Mackenzie, with many regrets at leaving and many plans for the future, left the old school for the last time. As I write now, when so much has happened in between, I see myself as a strong, awkward lad of nearly nineteen, good at swimming, football, and running, and vastly ignorant of all besides. My parents had died before I was old enough to know them, and it was my uncle Robert, my mother's brother, who received me into his house; and to him I was returning from school at the time of which I write. He lived in a dilapidated castle on the shore of Loch Hourn, a desolate enough spot, but never so to me who knew and loved every inch of its lonely country.

Much younger than my mother, my uncle was barely forty, and had it not been for his craze for invention, would, it is said, have made a name for himself in the field of medicine.

I shall never forget the night on which I arrived. Storms we were used to, and the wind was seldom quiet about the Sound of Sleat; but that evening it roared and screamed like a thing gone mad, while out where the loch meets the sea the rollers were streaked with white foam.

My uncle met me at the entrance, running into the garden with his arms outstretched to welcome me. I was considered tall for my years, but my uncle was full twelve inches taller, and so broad that he filled the doorway.

"What a night for your home-coming!" he cried, wringing my hand and clapping me on the back till my teeth chattered in my head. "Come in, lad, come in;" then, turning with a twinkle in his eye which I knew so well, "but I was forgetting," he added, "you're no longer a schoolboy, but a man of the world, eh?"

Outside the wind was rising every minute, and I was glad enough to get indoors and warm myself before the great fire in the hall, while my uncle, as excited as a child, busied himself about tea.

Martha, the housekeeper, who had cared for me as an orphaned child of three, was waiting for me in my bed-room, and kissed me (to my secret indignation, I remember) as my uncle was watching us from the doorway.

"Tut, Martha," said he, very seriously. "Mr. Alan is no boy now—I'm astonished at you!" But I gravely suspected him of laughing.

"He'll always be a wee bit laddie to me," said Martha, and did it again, at which my uncle shook with delight.

Such was my home-coming, and such the welcome I received.

After tea, my uncle leant back in his chair and for a while said nothing, but puffed at his pipe steadily. I can still see him, a great man in coarse Harris tweeds, bearded almost to the waist, and with the kindest, liveliest blue eyes ever set in a bronzed, weather-beaten face. He had the finest hands I ever saw on a man, more like a woman's in their delicate shape, and with thin wrists and strong, tapering fingers.

"Well, uncle," I said, growing weary of silence.

He looked at me with his pipe held in one hand, and the smoke from the bowl trailing up towards the ceiling.

"Much has happened since you left," he said, "and I would have written you, had I felt it was advisable. But things leak out, Alan, things leak out."

I stared at him, full of curiosity.

"What things, uncle?"

He glanced round the room as though he feared interruption, or worse, and drew his chair nearer me.

"Listen, boy," he said, in his deep, resonant voice. "You know how I've worked by night and day at perfecting my aeroplane. You remember how something always went wrong in my calculations, and how at last I was for giving up the idea altogether. Well, by accident,

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luck, good fortune, call it what you will, I've constructed a flying-machine capable of carrying half a dozen people for a considerable distance."

He blew a great cloud of smoke, his eyes sparkling with excitement.

"Listen," he said again, "and, on your oath, never breathe a word of what I'm going to say to anyone—you understand?"

I nodded.

My uncle rose and tiptoed to the door, and, grasping the handle swiftly, peered into the dark hall. Apparently satisfied, he returned and seated himself as before.

"Do you remember my friend, James Ruthven?" he asked, suddenly.

I nodded again. I could not have spoken at that moment had I been paid. My voice had melted away with the mystery of it all, and the strangeness of my uncle's manner. Well I recollected James Ruthven. He came to the castle one night, a year before, and a more wizened up, queer-looking man I had never seen. His head barely reached my shoulder, and as for my uncle, he could have crushed the life from Ruthven's diminutive body in one hand. But, for all that, he had a wonderful force about him, and his eyes were as keen as a hawk's, and so penetrating that they seemed to know everything in one's mind before one spoke, which makes talking somewhat precarious, if not unnecessary.

James Ruthven was my uncle's oldest friend. He was rarely in England, being much of a wanderer in strange corners of the world, though for what purpose I had never ascertained. He had come in the dead of night, like any Jacobite conspirator in the old days, and was gone before cock-crow. My uncle walked the beach much that day, and by his preoccupied and mysterious air had roused my curiosity to fever pitch, and when he said, "Isn't it time you were in bed?" to me when ten had barely struck, nothing could have driven me between sheets that night. But I left my uncle without a word and stole upstairs, where I blew out my candle and gently opened the window. I had a full hour to wait, however, and then I saw a dark form move into the ray of light from the sitting-room window beneath me, and a low, musical whistle reached my ears. At that, the front door which lies beside the window opened on the instant, and the stranger, whom I learned later was James Ruthven, vanished from sight. Long into the night I heard the rumble of their voices, and once my uncle uttered a sharp exclamation as though taken aback at something the other had said.

Such was the last coming of my uncle's friend, and a strange business it seemed to me at the time.

My uncle, meanwhile, had relit his pipe, and threw two logs upon the blaze, for the night, though it was August, was cold with the strong sea wind. Outside, the racket of rain and sleet and the thunder of the sea were fearsome, never abating, and sometimes banging the window-panes like the hammer of a person's hand.

"How it rains!" I said, glad of the warmth.

"Aye. Do you remember the last visit of James Ruthven?" he asked, looking at me queerly. "I mean the manner of his coming and going."

"Yes," I answered. "I watched him from my window."

"I suspected it," returned my uncle, with a shadow of a smile.

"Did you guess why he came in the dark of night?"

"No," said I, very alert to hear.

"Alan," said my uncle, leaning forward until his mouth nearly touched my ear, "*it was a matter of lost treasure!*"

When my uncle said that, I felt my heart give one bound, and then rat-tat-tat against my ribs like a postman's knock, and I shook myself to see if I had by any chance fallen asleep. I would as soon have looked for talk of treasure from Martha as from my uncle. I must have spoken my thoughts in my face, for my uncle repeated in a more matter-of-fact voice:—

"Yes, hidden treasure, but not easy to find, for all that. I must tell you that Ruthven has been on the track of this same treasure nearly all his life, and has hunted a thousand clues, only to find himself baffled. It was in '76 he saved an old Indian in South America from some Spaniards, and in his gratitude this old fellow, who was even then dying, told him of a legend, which had been handed down in his family, of a curious people who live in the centre of the Brazilian swamps and forests, and who have in their possession the ancient gems of the Indian princes, whom the Portuguese drove out at the beginning of the sixteenth century and onwards. Not that these gems were carried into the unknown city by the fleeing Indians, but by a white man who had lived with them, and who accom-

panied them when pursued by the Portuguese. Ruthven knew from that that it would probably be inland from Bahia, and spent four years in the interior working on this slender clue, and it was by the merest accident that he came to further knowledge. He was dining in Bahia with a leading Portuguese whose people had never left that district, and there was also a Spaniard, Don Pedro by name, who said he was visiting the country. Regarding this Don Pedro, I learned little from Ruthven, except that he was an exceedingly tall man and with a face unnaturally white, but he seemed disinclined or averse to discuss him, though his reason I could not grasp.

"After dinner, the host, who was an antiquarian, asked them if they had ever heard of the document his family had possessed for nearly four centuries, which had been a mystery to them, as to everyone else. Ruthven, naturally, was ready to be interested, and the Portuguese, leaving the room for a moment, returned with a piece of crumbling parchment on which a few faint characters still remained. It was written in English, but so dim with age that Ruthven could only decipher a few words. They ran: "I, Richard Beveridge . . . crown jewels. . . . Portuguese . . . the country of the three hills . . . cursed be all who . . ." and the MS. at that place was torn from corner to corner.

"Ruthven looked up at that, and was astonished to see that the Spaniard was white as death, and leaning towards him with a look of the deepest and most malignant hate in his eyes. He hastily turned to his host, and found him bland and smiling, evidently pleased that his guests were interested, but otherwise unconscious of any emotion.

"'How did your ancestors obtain this?' asked the Spaniard, after a pause.

"'Ah,' returned the Portuguese, 'a very curious incident indeed. My great-great—I cannot say how many great—grandfather, was lost in the region south of the Amazon River, and, climbing a crag, discovered an eagle's or some such bird's nest, and in it this parchment. Where the bird had brought it from is, of course, a mystery, and a difficult one to solve, but not so difficult as the meaning of it.'

"'It means nothing,' said the Spaniard; and from that moment Ruthven suspected him.

"Well, to cut a long story short, Ruthven and his old servant, Bruce, determined to find the country of the three hills, and according to the former it was remarkably like a district he had seen some months before far north in the Tapajos district. They returned first to England to make further arrangements. Several curious things happened on the voyage. First, Bruce was hustled while crossing the gangway of the steamer, and nearly fell into the sea. Then Ruthven awoke to find a man in his room, and just in time to knock a knife out of his hand, but not in time to catch him. Still, there was nobody to suspect, and it was only when the hotel in which they were staying was found to be on fire, and their escape a matter of the utmost difficulty, that they became alarmed. After that, Ruthven came up to tell me and to propose that I should accompany him, and on his way he got a bullet through his cap in a lonely country road, and from that moment determined to take precautions. He arranged that he and Bruce should start disguised as soon as possible, and, if all went well with the aeroplane, that I'd follow them as soon as I could. That was a year ago, and no word has reached me, but——"

At that moment, my uncle stopped short in his narrative, for outside, from the heart of the night, came the most dreadful cry I ever hope to hear. It turned my blood to ice, so pitiful was it, and so terrible, ringing eerily across the lonely shore.

For a second we sat too aghast to move; then both darted to the window. It was absolutely black outside, but of a sudden a blinding flash of lightning lit up the whole landscape like day, and not ten yards from the house was a man running wildly up the shore, and behind him with arms outstretched someone in pursuit; and then, with a terrible crash, thunder rolled and broke above us. But, before we could speak, the window was smashed to atoms, something flew between our heads, and landed with a soft thud upon the floor.

"Quick, Alan, the door!" cried my uncle, and began tugging at a rusty claymore on the wall. We rushed across the room, and as we tore at the bolts we heard another cry, but fainter, and then silence.

"Too late—too late!" cried my uncle, in a fever of impatience; and, using his enormous strength, he burst the door open with a wrench and crash of splintered locks, and was swallowed up in the night.

My heart failed me to be thus alone, with murder so near and the wind screaming round

me; but, at that instant, another flash of lightning showed me a scene I shall never forget. On the ground to my right a figure lay all huddled up, and tearing at his clothes was the man who had run with outstretched arms. My uncle had missed them in the murk, and, as darkness fell again, we both began to run in upon them. A moment later my throat was caught between two hands like steel, and I was flung bodily through the air, and striking a stone very sorely, lay half stunned. Above the wind I heard my uncle calling, but far away, and gave myself up for lost. As nothing happened, however, and I found myself not so hurt after all, I crawled towards the house, and as I reached the door my uncle passed me bearing a man in his arms. A minute later he had run out again, and when he saw me on all-fours upon the step he grasped me quickly by the coat, and with a great pull shot me into the hall and banged the door.

"Alan," he said, his breath coming and going, "we've made a sair muddle of this."

"Shall we go out and follow him?" I asked, though I did not like the job.

He shook his head.

"It would be madness, boy," he replied. "We cannot see a yard, and, besides, there is the wounded man in there. Come, we must attend to him."

We re-entered the sitting-room where he had laid the man face down upon the couch, and, as we did so, my uncle crossed the floor very swiftly, and banged together the shutters of the open window. Then, snatching up the lamp, he turned the man upon his back.

I did not recognise his features—they were commonplace enough, though deadly white—but I thought my uncle would have fallen when he saw them.

"What is it?" I cried, and he looked so perplexed I repeated my question; then, turning to me, he laid a hand on my arm.

"Alan," said he, very solemnly, "this is the beginning of a strange business. This man is Bruce, Ruthven's servant."

CHAPTER II

WHAT TOOK PLACE IN THE NIGHT

It did not take my uncle long to recover his self-possession, and I was so busy bringing basins and bandages that I had little time to spare for wondering at it all. Then, with his coat off and his sleeves rolled back, he ripped away the wounded man's clothes and displayed a great open gash between the shoulder-blades, with a curiously fashioned knife stilll adhering to the strong tweed coat.

"Put that in a safe place, Alan," he said, over his shoulder. And with a shudder I took it gingerly and began to look it up in the cupboard.

"Not there," said my uncle, though for what reason I could not understand; "take it up to my room, Alan, and put it in the chest under the bed, and see that Blower is shut up with it."

Blower was a massive bulldog, much loved by my uncle, and called so for his sonorous manner of breathing. He was a peaceable dog by preference, but a terror to the countryside because of his unprepossessing appearance. I never quite lost my fear of Blower, though he always tolerated my presence in the house.

Much mystified by these instructions, I did as my uncle told me, though Blower, who was asleep at the time in the kitchen, resented the whole procedure bitterly, and walked sourly upstairs with bared fangs and a bristling neck.

When I returned to the sitting-room my uncle had plugged the wound, and was holding a brandy flask to Bruce's mouth. A faint colour crept into his ashen cheeks, and a moment later he stirred uneasily.

"He'll do," whispered my uncle; "it's not a dangerous wound," and began scanning the floor suddenly.

"Alan," he said, "what was that flew past our heads?"

"Something smashed the glass," I broke in, supposing that was what he meant.

"Search the floor," he cried back, as excited as I, and was on his knees beside me before I could move.

We scoured the room and found nothing, and, much perplexed and disappointed, stood up and looked at each other dolefully.

"Oh, Alan," said my uncle, almost in tears, "why did we leave the door open?"

"But look, it's on the cupboard!" I cried joyfully; and, with a shout, my uncle grasped a square package and brought it to the light.

It was wrapped, first of all, in leather, and under that, in some material like bark and very durable. A letter was written on a piece of dried skin and lay upon a folded roll of manuscript. Opening the manuscript he found a great map of Brazil very carefully drawn, and a red line from the town of Bahia winding upwards towards the Amazon. In the centre

"Quick, Alan, the door!" cried my uncle, as he began tugging at a rusty claymore on the wall. As I rushed across the room we heard another cry. Were we too late?

between the two, and marked with four stars, were three great mountains, and in Ruthven's writing the words: "The Country of the Three Hills." All about these hills lay heavy belts of swamps and morass, and great rivers running south, with large black patches to represent forests. With a hurried glance at this my uncle took up the letter.

"Dear Bob," it ran, "I am in the hands of an unknown people. Should Bruce win through he will explain all; if not, good-bye. It has been a terrible trek, and nothing can save me or win the treasure but the flying machine. Above all, beware of the man with the scar, should you risk your life for your friend James."

He laid down the letter and looked at me very dolefully, and then, rising to his feet, lit a pipe, and, with knitted brows, began walking slowly up and down the room. Once an idea seemed to strike him, for he paused, his pipe in his hand and his eyes on the fire; but, shaking his head, he started again up and down the room. Suddenly, from upstairs, came a sharp bark from Blower, and a heavy thud as he sprang from the bed upon the floor.

My uncle halted, and stood with his head on one side, listening intently, and as the tumult upstairs grew louder, and we heard Blower in full cry, he laughed softly to himself. After a little, silence fell again, and he turned to me.

"Alan," he said, "go upstairs and shut the window in my bedroom."

"But it is shut," I remarked, at a loss.

"I don't think so," he answered, with meaning in his words; "and after that, tell Martha to make up another bed there; and close the shutters, boy—mind that. Then come back." And as I left the room he was standing before the fire again, with a look of profound thought upon his face.

I crept up the dark stairs, and turned the handle of the bedroom door. But the door opened with difficulty, and a roar of wind passed me from the room, and mingled with it the sound of Blower's menacing growl.

"Blower," I called, to still him, and entered the room.

It was as my uncle had said. The window was wide open, and the strong sea wind was blowing in great gusts into the room, and sending the curtains dancing like ghosts upon the floor; and before the window, firmly established upon a chair, was Blower, trembling with fury, his eyes fixed upon the garden below. So shaken was I with the horrors of that night that I nearly ran from the room, but fear of my uncle's ridicule braced me to approach the window and lower the sash, though my heart stood still as I did so. Then, fastening the shutters, I breathed again. Had that not been the only window within reach of the ground the house would have held a multitude of fears, but the inaccessible nature of the other rooms—saving the sitting-room—gave me confidence, and I set about calling Martha, and making a couch for the sick man downstairs. Martha looked askance at me when I told her to bring sheets and blankets.

"There's ill goings-on the night, Master Alan," she said, in a melancholy voice, but with the odd satisfaction which Scotch people find in gloomy proceedings.

I made no reply, and she came very close to me, and looked into my face.

"Master Alan," she said, with a touch of pathos, "this is no treating me fairly." And so I told her everything, and how there was a man out in the night there who wished us all no good.

"My certes," she said, with great indignation, "if I see the impudent body I'll give him a piece of my mind."

Which I quite believed.

It was fully half an hour before I returned to the sitting-room, and when I had done so it was to find my uncle at his desk. But, as I entered, he put away some papers and shut the top with a snap.

"Is the room ready?" he asked.

I told him it was, and how the window was wide open when I had gone in.

"I see," he mused; "so far, so good. And now help me with Bruce. He will be much better to-morrow, and able to tell us everything about this strange affair."

While he was speaking I saw him place the package where we had found it, on the top of the cupboard, and then without another word we set about carrying Bruce upstairs and putting him to bed. He moaned a little, but never opened his eyes, and was soon sleeping peacefully.

My uncle, meanwhile, went downstairs to Martha, and after a little I heard the lock turn in her bedroom door, though what he had said to her I did not know. He came back humming to himself, evidently in high good humour.

"Alan," he said, "let's make a night of it. Bruce, there, has a sleeping draught, and won't move for twelve hours, and it's already midnight. Did I ever tell you how I won the boxing match at Edinburgh?"

I had often wanted to hear how he had beaten Jack Humphreys, the heavy-weight, and was in no wise averse to staying with him, anyway, that night, instead of alone in my bedroom at the other end of the passage.

"Blow out the light, lad," he said; and when I gaped at him, he added, hurriedly, "in case it wakes Bruce"; though it seemed to me that

if he did not stir for my uncle's story he would not mind one poor candle. But I said nothing. The house was very quiet now, as the storm had passed with the turn of the tide, and a new moon was sailing in a clear sky. From the bay came a soft murmur and the rattle of stones on the beach to the suck of the ebbing sea.

My uncle smoked steadily, and began his story, and all that I could see in the room were the bars of silver moonlight under the shutters and the red glow in the bowl of his pipe. For a long time I was too preoccupied with the strangeness of the situation to pay much heed to the tale, though at any other time I would have sat spellbound. But at last I found myself so absorbed, especially when my uncle was down and the umpire was calling out the seconds, that I forgot everything else, and held my breath with the utmost excitement. And then my uncle stopped short, and at that moment I heard a faint sound downstairs, and a curious rattle at the door, as though a gust of wind had shaken it. Everything came back to me again.

"What's that?" I whispered, starting up.

But my uncle only drew at his pipe again.

"The umpire reached ten," he continued, in a louder voice, "and I rose painfully to my feet, feeling as weak as a child——"

"Are you sure?" I broke in, fearfully, staring at the door. But he did not seem to hear.

"How they cheered!" he went on, never stopping; "and as Humphreys came at me I dodged, to win back my strength, and simulated a greater exhaustion than I really felt. And then in the next round I saw my chance. Humphreys hit at me with savage assurance. His great fist just shaved my head; I clipped him under the chin, and laid him senseless on the mat."

He put his pipe down, and, going to the window, unlatched the shutters very softly, and peered out into the night. The room was flooded with moonlight. A moment later he drew back very suddenly, and turned to me.

"Let us see all is right downstairs," he said. "Bring the candle, Alan, and follow me."

We went down to the sitting-room, and the moon was streaming in through the open window.

"Look!" I gasped. "The shutters have been opened!"

And then, running to the cupboard, I thrust my hand along the top. A great dread came over me.

"Uncle!" I cried. "The map has gone!"

CHAPTER III

BRUCE TELLS HIS STORY

WHEN I stared aghast at my uncle after the discovery that the map was stolen, I quite expected him to be even more disturbed than myself; but to my astonishment he quietly closed the shutters, and turned to me with a smile.

"Alan," said he, "although you mayn't realise it, we've won the first move."

"What do you mean?" I asked, quite in the dark.

He walked over to his desk, and, unlocking it, thrust a hand inside and touched a secret spring. A small drawer shot out, and from this he took out a roll of paper.

He unfolded it in the candle-light.

"Not such a bad imitation!" he said, with a note of triumph in his voice. And there before me lay a duplicate of Ruthven's map—forests, hills, and crosses complete.

"Where did this come from?" I asked, with the greatest astonishment.

"When you and Martha were making the beds upstairs I amused myself down here," he replied, with a twinkle in his eyes for the first time that night. "It may not have occurred to you that our friend outside would never leave us while we possessed this map; so I thought the best and simplest plan was to let him take it, and return to Brazil as quickly as he likes—if that is his desire."

"Then you knew that he would break in?"

"Naturally—especially when he tried upstairs first; and he did not follow Bruce merely to be put off by locks and bolts."

I sat in silence for a moment, marvelling at my uncle's cleverness, and then a sudden thought struck me.

"But, uncle," I said, "how does this help Ruthven? Don't you see we'll be outdistanced now?"

"You must think me a sad fool," he replied, in a melancholy manner. "Our visitor has now no more cares or worries in the world. He will return leisurely to Bahia or to Para, which lies at the mouth of the Amazon. The City of the Three Hills lies at the apex of a triangle between the two, and is a terrible place to get to apparently. Meanwhile

we will take boat to New York, and if all goes well will aeroplane over the swamps and forests, and arrive in the City of the Three Hills while our friend is plunging through the undergrowth, which should leave sufficient time to rescue Ruthven, and find the treasure as well."

"Forgive me, uncle," I said; and then, as we went upstairs together, I stopped short. "Why did you not tell me this before?" I said.

He smiled down at me in the candle-light.

"Because you might have looked out of the window, like last time," he said. And I saw he had not forgotten Ruthven's visit, and how I had watched him from that very window long ago.

That night, wearied out with the events of the day, we all slept like the dead, and it was only in the morning, with the sun shining brightly upon the still surface of the loch, and Martha clinking pans downstairs, that I rubbed my eyes, and wondered if it were not all a dream.

After breakfast my uncle went upstairs and dressed Bruce's wound, and then, coming to the top of the stairs, called for me. When I entered the room I was surprised to see how much better the sick man looked already. His eyes rested on me a moment, then turning his head a little in my uncle's direction, he asked, in a soft accent which I did not recognise, if this was his nephew, at which my uncle introduced me, and I sat down very carefully upon the side of the bed.

"You'll not be over-pleased at the manner of my arrival, Master Alan," murmured Bruce. And I hastened to say that it was a mercy he had arrived at all, with such dangers to overcome; which introduced the subject of his journey.

Bruce had been servant, companion, and nurse to James Ruthven for the last twenty years, and had during that time visited every country on the face of the earth, and passed through some strange experiences. He was a Scotsman by birth, but had emigrated to Canada when a boy of seventeen, and after serving in the North-West Mounted Police, had gone prospecting for gold and fallen in with Ruthven.

In repeating Bruce's story I will not attempt to give it in his own words, as he used foreign expressions and colloquialisms I could not follow.

"You will remember," he began, "that when my master and I left England a year ago it was with the purpose of finding the City of the Three Hills, where it is said there is hidden treasure. We were in danger, you recollect, from an unknown enemy, and it was with the utmost difficulty we gave him the slip. But we congratulated ourselves too soon. On the road into the interior our luggage was rifled three times, and twice we were shot at, and once our mules stampeded at night for no apparent reason. All this made us doubly careful, and we never left camp unarmed or lay down at night without our rifles beside us. And yet we never saw anyone, or heard anything, until the suspense got on our nerves, so that we could hardly bear the tension of it."

"It must have been stray savages," broke in my uncle.

Bruce shook his head.

"No," he replied; "we thought that at first, but every morning we found a curious sign near camp, sometimes cut on a rock, or on the ground, or formed by sticks—a sign something like this." And, raising himself feebly, Bruce drew a pencil from his coat, and scrawled on a fragment of paper a figure like an equilateral triangle. "And once when one of our carriers was killed we found this cut on his breast."

"An equilateral triangle," repeated my uncle. "What, in the name of mischief, can that represent?"

Bruce shook his head.

"We never guessed," he replied; "but it troubled us a good bit, and when the fourth carrier had been murdered my master was all for returning. However, we always hoped that, as we travelled further into the well-nigh impenetrable forests in Central Brazil, we would lose sight of our pursuers, or outdistance them; and we knew that nothing on this earth would make our few remaining carriers endanger their lives by deserting us. I never saw men so terrified as they; and we could hardly induce them to gather wood for our camp fire, or launch our canoe, unless they went in a body. As you no doubt are aware, Central Brazil is almost impassable except by water, so my master found a map easy to draw, and it was for a very good reason that he chose the smaller rivers, which are navigable in canoe, knowing that the Englishman who had carried the gems long ago would travel by the quickest route. Often we waited in creek to ambush our secret enemies, but we never saw them, and I believe they had paths through the undergrowth we never dreamed of.

"At last we reached a great lake, so shallow

that it was virtually a swamp, and for the first time for many weeks we had a clear view of the surrounding country. Now, my master and I had approached this district some time before, but from the other side, and noticed at that time three great hills standing almost together. We endeavoured to get across to them, but failed, and as the rains were nearly due we returned as quickly as possible. I can see, as clearly as I see you, my master standing up in the bow of the canoe, and pointing with his hand, saying, 'Bruce, there they are, and we'll soon reach the other side of them now. It strikes me that the aeroplane will be a trifle late,' and at that even the carriers raised a cheer."

Bruce sank back for a few minutes, and we watched him in silence, being much stirred by this simple narrative, and the quiet, modest manner of his speech.

"That was six months ago," he resumed, "six weary months. When we landed we hid the canoe, and marched inland, and all the time my master carried a hatchet and blazed the trail, in case of emergencies. On the tenth day we had driven our way through the heart of the forest, and only lost one man by a snake-bite. Of our followers we had seen nothing, and hoped that they had given up the pursuit. It was not to be, however, for on the twelfth day we made camp at the foot of one of the three mountains, and on the morrow proposed to start the ascent. I must say it looked a hazardous undertaking, for the sides were precipitous and like glass, but we had ropes and axes, and were filled with hope. But in the middle of that night, when we were all sleeping heavily through exhaustion, we were overpowered and bound by savages of so strange a nature that I must tell you of them. The clothes that they wore were beautiful in colouring and design, and were curiously like the bark of trees; but here and there some were dressed all in bright green leaves, and I began to wonder whether, if they had lined the bank of the river, we would have distinguished them from the surrounding forest. They were tall and slightly built for the most part, with fine features and an odd colour, like a cross between a Spaniard and an Indian, with something altogether unlike the two which I cannot describe. But I had little time to notice more, for we were bundled into a cave in the rock, and left together. For a long time we said nothing, and my master sat in the deepest gloom. But through some experience of knots and such-like I wriggled one arm free, and, finding a piece of flint, worked my way through the thongs on my legs until I was quite free. I then set about getting Mr. Ruthven loose, and in a few minutes, though it seemed hours to us, we both stood up and whispered together about what was best to be done.

"But from the start my master was convinced that he had no chance of escape, being, as you know, a small man, and slow of foot; so he ordered me to take charge of the map, and hastily wrote the letter which I brought. We settled that we would steal out in different directions, and, if we both escaped, meet at the canoe, and start down the river. Then my master shook my hand, and without a word we parted, and I wound my way through the undergrowth—a trick I had learned from Indian warfare in the eighties—and I had cleared the camp by about a mile when I heard running footsteps, and stepped off the path in time to see Mr. Ruthven run past at full speed. I followed him, and as I came up with him he turned and cried, in a voice I shall never forget, 'Bruce, I am being overtaken. Go on, I implore you, for all rests on you, and they do not know you have escaped too.'

"I tried to reason with him, but he burst into tears, and begged me to conceal myself, which I did; and he set off running again, but was overtaken almost immediately. I have seen the Indians run, and they are not slow, but those men moved like deer; and soon my poor master passed me again, but never looking to right or left, and when they were gone out of sight I took to my heels and made straight for the canoe. I had instinctively hidden my revolver and half a dozen cartridges before my hands were bound, and thus managed to shoot enough to keep me alive until I reached the river bank, and there I found our tinned provisions, which we had left for our return.

"Just as I pushed off I heard the sound of running footsteps, and saw a man appear upon the bank. It was evening at the time, and I could not distinguish his face, but he cried out in fury, and shook his fist, and had I felt able to spare a shot I would have killed him to cover my tracks. However, he disappeared at once, and I paddled for all I was worth down stream.

"It was on the fourteenth day I realised I was pursued, and it struck me then that the man on the bank must have returned, or gone up stream for assistance and a canoe. Seeing

that I had little chance in my canoe, which was intended for six men, I resolved to waylay my pursuers, and for this purpose halted where the river had narrowed to some forty feet of rapidly flowing water. I tied a rope from a tree on one side to a rock on the other just below the water-line. My own canoe I concealed under some trees a mile lower down.

"I had only to wait a few minutes when my pursuers turned the corner and swept into the current. The nose of their boat flew straight upon the hidden rope, and the stern leaped in the air, and then the rush of water toppled the whole thing over, and the occupants were swept down stream, and I heard a shrill cry and saw the water lashed to foam by an alligator's tail. But I did not wait to see how they fared, and, plunging through the undergrowth as best I could, I jumped into my own boat, and paddled away.

"I had no further trouble till I arrived at Para two months later, and there I began to experience so many attempts on my life that I hastily boarded the *Hildebrand*, bound for Liverpool. During the voyage I rarely left my cabin, and never at nights; but twice, despite my precautions, my trunk was rifled, and once I was nearly precipitated down the companion-way. I turned at once, but saw nobody; and after that I was more careful still. When I landed I took a taxi to the station to catch the Scotch express, and as the train was leaving a man darted into my carriage with many apologies; but I sprang out at once, to the danger of my neck, and he travelled alone. I lost my luggage, but I may have saved my life.

"I took a train for London at once, and thence to Scotland, and had I not lost a connection would have arrived here yesterday morning. As it was I got here, but that was about all, as you know."

Bruce closed his eyes, and my uncle and I looked at each other in a daze.

"See," whispered my uncle, "he has fallen asleep—let us go downstairs."

We walked down in silence, and not long after went out on to the lawn. But as we stood there my uncle started, and pointed silently on to the stone flags outside the porch.

For on the centre one, in some sort of dark chalk, were scrawled three straggling lines in the shape of a triangle.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAN WITH THE SCAR

"HUM," said my uncle, between his teeth, bending down to examine the figure on the stone. "He's done that to show us who's scored, and from the poor job he's made of it he must have been in a desperate hurry."

"What can it mean?" I asked, staring first at my uncle and then at the stone at our feet.

"I wish I knew, Alan, and though I have my suspicions, I am quite in the dark myself. But there is one thing as certain as we stand here, and that is that he comes from Brazil, and is one of the people whom Bruce spoke of last night."

"But how could a savage cross the sea, and follow Bruce through England?"

My uncle shook his head.

"I don't know," he replied; "but let's leave considerations of that sort till we are in a better position to judge for ourselves. In the meantime, I flatter myself we have stolen a march on our visitor of last evening by letting him regain the map. Now we must make our plans for the immediate future, and I think if Bruce is awake we'll have another talk with him."

We re-entered the house and went upstairs again. Bruce was sitting up and taking some bread and milk which Martha, who had a soft place for invalids, had brought him.

"Martha," said my uncle, solemnly, "there's a drawing at the porch which you will be good enough to leave when you wash the steps."

Martha looked at us all in turn without a word, and then, raising her hands slightly, as she did when things had passed beyond her knowledge, she murmured:—

"As you will, sir; as you will," and, shaking her head doletully, she left the room accompanied by Blower, and with the air of a person who is prepared for the worst.

"Well, Bruce," said my uncle, "how is it with you?"

"Fine, sir, thank you," he answered; "only I'm as weak as a kitten, I'm afraid." His face grew rather wistful. "You won't go without me, sir, will you?"

My uncle stirred uneasily, and coughed behind his hand.

"Well, Bruce," he began, "I'm afraid you can't travel for quite three weeks yet; and as matters stand we must start much sooner than that—in fact, at once."

"But there is no great hurry, sir, is there? if you'll pardon me saying so—at least so long as we have the map safe."

There was a sharp cry from the bed, and Bruce, leaning forward, almost snatched the knife from my hand. "The very one," he said, with a world of horror in his voice.

So my uncle told him of his plot to get rid of his pursuers, and after a moment Bruce chuckled in spite of his disappointment.

"By the way, Bruce," said my uncle, "who is our visitor of last night? Is he the man with the scar?"

The wounded man started up in bed, and his hand shook as he gripped the sheets.

"The man with the scar!" he whispered, hoarsely. "Who says he's the man with the scar?"

We both were amazed at this sudden change in his demeanour.

"There, there, Bruce," said my uncle, soothingly, "don't excite yourself, like a good fellow."

"Yes," continued Bruce, his eyes dilated with some emotion we could not understand; "but what do you know of the man with the scar?"

"Nothing," said my uncle, as much at a loss as I, "except your master mentions him in his letter. He says, 'Beware of the man with the scar.'"

Bruce lay back and breathed laboriously.

"A sick man like myself gets rum notions," he said, in a voice we could hardly catch, "and if I frightened you it was not intentional,

but only because I'm not myself. But Mr. Ruthven never said a word to me of the man with the scar, and I got a shock. Of course, there's lots of men with scars. But I interrupted you, sir."

"Not at all, Bruce," said my uncle, "and if you can tell us anything of this man, so much the better, as he seems a force to be reckoned with."

"Well, sir, I don't know that I can tell you much—I don't know that anyone can do that. Few men meet him without regretting it to the end of their days, and most would give their right hand if they could have avoided it altogether. It was in the late seventies I first heard of him, and then under the name of Sargo. It was in Central Africa, where I was trading with the natives for ivory. I had a slice of luck, and as I was packing up for the coast I met a white man, who came out of the forest as though it were out of a private park, and was very affable and pleasant. He was a tall man with black hair and eyes, and a small moustache. But the most noticeable feature was a long slash from his right eye to his chin, like the work of a sabre. Well, that night I heard the most terrible cries and shrieks from the native village near at hand, and running down with my gun I was aghast to see the fellow calmly watching a herd of niggers clubbing the villagers and hauling off the women in droves, apparently for slaves. I cried out to him to join me, and blazed away like fury; but suddenly I was laid out by a bang over the head, and when I recovered I found myself bound hand and foot on the hot sand, with the ropes which bound me fastened to stakes in the ground, and apparently deserted. The village was nowhere to be seen; the sun was about to rise, and I gave myself up for lost. Then, to my horror, a small army of ants began to approach my face, and I howled and screamed with terror. I must have fainted, for when I opened my eyes I was in the hands of natives, the survivors of the massacre of the night before. When I was about to resume my journey I asked them—for I knew a smattering of their language—who was the man with the scar, when, to my astonishment, they seemed petrified with fear, and, shaking their heads in a troubled manner, hastened away without a word. I asked a settler far away from that district if he had ever heard of the scoundrel, and his only answer was to bring me indoors, and then whisper, as though this room had ears:—

"'Have you never heard of Sargo before?'

"At which I said, 'No.'

"'Well,' he replied, 'you're a lucky man to have got off so asily.' And I saw that, like the natives, he was anxious above all things that I should leave him as soon as possible.

"After ten years I was in New York, and got in a rumpus down in Chinatown, through poking my nose into other people's affairs, and who should appear but the man with the scar. The Chinese, when they saw him, ran like rats to their holes, and, coming up very close to me, he said, 'It happens you escaped last time. If you say a word of this to anyone, or ever cross my tracks again, I'll see you have no tongue in your mouth to talk with.' Although he was dressed as a Chinaman, I detected him by his scar at once. Before I could move, he whistled in a shrill way, and I was instantly surrounded and thrown upon the ground. One of my feet was bound, and the man with the scar drew a knife from his belt and bent over me. I can still see that knife—with its curved blade and inlaid handle, like one used by the Malays. On the handle, I remember, was a golden flower. He sat upon my legs, and then, without a word, began to cut through the joint of my big toe. I shrieked with agony, but he went on quite calmly, and when he had finished they loosed me, and he remarked, as I limped about in the utmost misery, 'That will keep you nearer home in future, Mr. Bruce,' and before I could reply I was alone.

"Well, I got pretty scared at that, and it was in India that I had my next experience of the man with the scar. I was searching for a hidden temple among the hills, and as night fell I crawled into what looked like a ruined castle, and was soon asleep. In the middle of the night I woke, and was astonished to see the place brilliantly lighted, and to hear a loud murmur of voices. I was in the shadow, fortunately, and I crouched back to avoid being seen. As I watched, with my revolver in my hand in case of emergencies, I saw a tall figure, dressed in a long yellow garment like a priest's, advancing towards a raised stone slab at the end of the building. Behind him came great numbers of Indians, all singing with weird, distorted faces. Suddenly the music stopped, and the tall figure raised his hand, and began to speak. In that instant, though I did not understand a word he said, I recognised him

as the man with the scar, and I got such a shock that I fell back against the wall behind me, and loosened a great lump of masonry. The crash was audible all over the temple, for such I realised it to be, but the man with the scar never looked up or stopped speaking, though the people swayed about in my direction.

"There was a great lamp placed in the middle of the temple, and trusting to the draught from all sides of the fallen walls to blow out the flame, I fired straight at the centre of it, and splintered it to atoms. The flames swirled up violently, and then the temple was plunged into darkness, and I rushed into the night for all I was worth. Daybreak saw me safe some twenty miles away, and soon I was in Calcutta. A few days after my arrival there I felt a tap on my shoulder, and, turning round, saw the man with the scar beside me, dressed as an English tourist, and clean-shaven.

"'You will find your luggage on board the *Galicia*,' he remarked, 'and as she sails in an hour you had better be quick.'

"'But what if I refuse?' I returned.

"'It is easy to shoot at lamps, Mr. Bruce,' he answered in his soft voice, which I loathed, so that I nearly hit him there and then, 'but it is not safe to do it more than once. In fact, Mr. Bruce, if you do not see your way to leave India for good, I will give you three days, and then——' And with a shrug of his shoulders he turned up the street.

"Well, I took his advice and sailed, and I've never run across him since, nor want to; and what my master means I cannot say, though it has given me a turn."

"By George!" said my uncle, "what an unpleasant person! I feel inclined to take James's advice and steer jolly clear of him. But where is he? Surely not in Brazil! By the way, Alan, where is that dagger we found last night?"

I opened the chest, and pulled out the knife, with its dreadful stain upon the blade.

"There," I said, holding it up.

There was a sharp cry from the bed, and Bruce, leaning forward, almost snatched it from my hand.

"The very one!" he cried, with a world of wonder and horror in his voice.

And then we understood, for on the handle, standing out in clear relief, was a carving of a golden flower.

CHAPTER V

TO THE RESCUE OF RUTHVEN

WE all became very silent of a sudden, and my uncle looked graver than I had ever seen him before. As for Bruce, he turned the knife over and over in his hand, and wore a most melancholy face all the time.

"The man with the scar?" I said, as no one else seemed inclined to speak.

"Yes," said Bruce, "that's his knife."

My uncle thrust his hands in his pockets, hunched his shoulders, and stared out to sea.

"I must start at once," he said.

"You!" I cried. "Alone!"

And my face must have shown my disappointment, for he clapped me on the back, and said things were now too hazardous for boys fresh from school, at which Bruce laid down the knife and nodded his head. But I implored him not to leave me, and brought so many arguments to bear, emphasising, above all, that the man with the scar would not reach the hidden city until we had gone, that at last my uncle said, "Very well," though without any enthusiasm; and again Bruce shook his head, but this time with a sort of despair. My uncle sat down again.

"I have thought out as carefully as I can what is the best course to take," he began, "and you will interrupt me if I seem to be in error. As you both know, our hopes lie in the aeroplane. It is a dirigible balloon, to be exact, and yet is not the popular conception of that unwieldy machine. The problem presented to my mind was how to construct a flying machine which would carry passengers and provisions and petrol, and yet not be at the mercy of the weather. After many failures, I gave instructions and despatched plans to New York for the construction of a monoplane supported underneath by a long, cigar-shaped bag some forty feet long and eight feet in diameter, to be filled with purified hydrogen. Above is the car of the monoplane, with a wing stretching out on either side. Above that again, held by hemp cords, is another cigar-shaped bag some sixty feet long and ten in diameter. As you observe, the shape and small diameter of these bags lessen the air resistance, and by a cage-work of thin steel wires the upper bag is kept in place and the tendency to fall back at a high rate of speed is largely decreased. That, roughly, is the idea of the machine, but the technical details you will understand better when we reach New York."

"Then we sail to New York?"

"Yes, we take boat to-morrow afternoon from Liverpool, and will be there under a week; and on the way to Brazil in ten days, with luck.'

"But how can you carry petrol and provisions for so long a journey?"

"I can't," replied my uncle; "but I have already arranged with my American engineer that on receipt of a cable he will despatch a boat down to lie off the coast in case of need, and I can travel with the aid of the wind some five hundred miles, roughly, without recharging."

"Uncle, how splendid!" I cried. "And how grand to save Mr. Ruthven!"

My uncle's face fell.

"Ah," he replied, "that's the point! Will we be too late, I wonder?"

There was a long pause. Then Bruce broke silence.

"Begging your pardon, sir," said he, "but what about me?"

"You?" returned my uncle. "Why, you'll be as happy as a cricket on the hearth! Martha can look after you, and I'll tell the gardener and his wife to live here, and make you more cheery. Oh, you'll be all right!"

"But, sir, begging your pardon again, I'm not an old man or a very ill one, to sit and warm my toes with old women. I'm well enough to start in a few days. I've turned out with worse wounds than this by a long chalk, and, mind my words, I'll do it again—you see if I don't! What would Mr. Ruthven say if you arrive without me, and told him I was at home with the gardener?"

My uncle looked very perplexed, and caught my eye in a comical manner, so that I laughed outright.

"Why can't he follow?" I whispered.

"Yes," said Bruce, overhearing me, "I'll follow you—bust me, that I will! And—who knows?—I may get there afore you after all, and have a look at the treasure all by myself."

"But how will you go, Bruce?"

"Why, by the way I came, sir!" Then he stopped short. "But the only thing is—what if you've gone, and I walk into the city and meet Mr. Sargo taking a stroll? That would be the end of *my* part of the expedition, I reckon."

"Yes," said my uncle, "that is a difficulty but I think one we can surmount. To-day is Tuesday. We sail to-morrow, and reach New York on Monday. Then six weeks from Monday should see us in the city. Your friend with the scar will sail for Para, and start up the Amazon from there, and we will have a clear two weeks at any rate, as he can't sail till next week. I have an idea we'll need that time. We ought really to have a word or two with Sargo, as he calls himself, and I see no reason why we should rush away if we have the treasure under hatches, and Ruthven is free. Our coasting vessel will be within a thousand miles. Now, my idea is this: Suppose anything goes wrong, and we get tied up in this unknown place, as is not improbable, then we will depend absolutely on you, Bruce, to come to our assistance. If you do not reach us within four months I'll know that we have been worsted all along the line. At present we hold the winning cards; but from the reputation of the man with the scar it is only a temporary advantage."

"Right you are, sir!" said Bruce, heartily. "And rely on me. I've got a debt to pay myself, and besides that, there is my master;" and the poor fellow looked as though he would break down at the thought.

After that my uncle became very busy, and had no time to do anything but pack, write letters and cheques, and send off cables and wires, until I wondered whether he ever expected to return. With Martha's assistance I collected my slender wardrobe, and, putting in all the warmest things I possessed, placed them in a far-travelled kit-bag belonging to my uncle

At last all was prepared, and our luggage in the hall. It was six o'clock and a beautiful, still evening, with the cattle standing knee-deep in the shallows of the loch, and I had a sudden regret at leaving the old place, which surprised me not a little, as the journey promised to be full of incident and adventure. My uncle, too, seemed loth to leave the house, and lingered with Bruce, telling him to get better quickly, and then going back for a last farewell. Martha was very busy with the luggage and little packages of refreshments for the night journey to Liverpool, and never looked at either of us. Blower, like an astute dog, had a keen knowledge of our departure, and was greatly perturbed, wandering about thrusting his square head into empty rooms, and getting in everybody's way.

"Bruce," called my uncle from the bottom of the stairs, as the trap drove up to the door; "good-bye—and if you want company bring Blower with you."

"I think I've enough on without that," returned Bruce cautiously, "but thank you

kindly. Good-bye, and good luck to you and Master Alan!"

And so, with Martha standing at the door, and Blower beside her, with a multitude of hopes, and not a few regrets, we drove up the hill and away; but had we known what lay before us, I question whether we would have waved our hands so cheerily.

Next day we boarded the *Mauretania*, and in five days were in New York.

On the voyage nothing of outstanding interest occurred, and we discussed our plans very thoroughly. My uncle was one of the most methodical and cautious men I have ever met. He allowed for every emergency, but when anything unforeseen did occur he always surprised me by the rapidity with which he would adapt himself to the new situation, and it was largely through this cool-headedness that he had saved his life in awkward circumstances.

We received news of the outside world by wireless telegraphy, and a paper was in circulation on board. By it we were all, and especially the womenkind, astonished to hear that John Dunlop, the millionaire of New York, had disappeared, and there was a rumour that he had been kidnapped. As my uncle knew him well he was much concerned.

When we passed the Statue of Liberty, and the harbour of the city began to fold about us, my uncle turned to me.

"Alan," said he, with his eyes fixed on the immense buildings before us, and the gloomy smoke hanging over the city like a cloud; "Alan, for good or ill we have taken the step, for when we land on the quay there our expedition has virtually begun. The more I think of it the less I like it, and I almost wish you would return."

He hesitated, and I shook my head; at which he smiled and patted me on the back.

And soon after we had landed, and the first step in the rescue of Ruthven was taken.

CHAPTER VI

THE SIGN OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

THE evening of our arrival in New York was so fine that we felt very little inclined to stay indoors, and, stepping into the street, boarded a tramcar, and were soon swept into the centre of the city. When we had travelled for an hour or so my uncle suggested that we should alight; and to that I agreed, very readily, as I was wearied of sight-seeing, and very hungry.

We turned into a quieter neighbourhood, and as we did so a woman with a basket of white roses accosted us, and seemed determined that we should not escape her. The more we talked, as though we did not notice her, the louder she proclaimed the wonderful qualities of her basket, and the faster we walked the quicker she shambled along beside us, until my uncle in despair bought two roses from her, and to prevent a further recurrence of the nuisance we thrust them into our button-holes like yokels on a Sunday. By this time we had lost our bearings completely, but went blindly on in the hope of finding a restaurant where we could obtain some dinner. As we turned the next corner we overtook two men going in the same direction, and as we passed them I could not help noticing that they started and stared at us more than was polite or natural, and whispered together, with their eyes upon us. My uncle, from his great height and chestnut beard, was accustomed to people looking at him, but to my mind these two were thinking of something else which I could not comprehend. We went on, however, and soon after reached a small restaurant with an Italian name—"Hotel de Florence," if I remember aright—and as we scanned the menu card on the window the two men overtook us, and, with a good evening, in which I detected a foreign accent, they passed within, and we followed. The proprietor, a stout, black-haired man, met them in the passage, and said, "How is it with you?" to which one of them answered, "It is well;" and at that they both disappeared along the dim passage. Seeing us there, he came forward, and, with a meaning smile—at least, so it seemed to me—he repeated his question, "How is it with you?"

Now there are occasions when one acts on the impulse of the moment, and often with disastrous consequences. Some such impulse swept over me as I waited for my uncle to reply, and when he only stared at the man I said, as naturally as possible, "It is well"; and at that he motioned us to pass, and we went along the passage after the two men.

"Alan," whispered my uncle, "I don't understand. Why did he say that, and what did you reply in those words for?"

"I don't know," I answered. "Shall we go back?"

"No," he returned, sharply, "I'm bothered

A tremendous turmoil of voices rose at once, "Police spies!" they shouted at us. My uncle faced the crowd of furious faces, the chair swinging loose in his hands. Then, as I grasped the door-handle, a shot splintered the wood beside my head.

if we will!" And as he moved on his flower fell from his button-hole.

Before we had gone a dozen steps, however, the proprietor came running after us.

"You've lost the insignia," he said, politely. "Let me replace it. There." And he pushed the stalk back into the hole.

My uncle stood without a movement while he did so, looking first at the flower and then at the man, and with such a world of perplexity in his eyes that I was thankful the passage was comparatively dark.

"Alan," he whispered, as we followed the man, who now preceded us, "keep your eye on me, and do what I do." And at that moment a door opened directly in front of us, and we were ushered into a long, narrow room nearly filled with men.

A dead silence fell over the gathering, and a score of faces were turned in our direction. But what I noticed at once was this: Every man of them wore a white flower in his button-hole.

The door shut softly behind us, and, advancing as naturally as we could, my uncle and I took vacant seats, and began to take stock of our surroundings. To some extent the conversation was resumed about us, but one man in particular persisted in eyeing us with some hostility and much suspicion, and whispered continually to his neighbour, a huge fellow with ruddy features, who shrugged his shoulders as though he could offer no assistance.

They were nearly all foreigners, but here and there I detected an American face; but I drew no comfort from that, for of all the evil-looking scoundrels there the Americans looked the worst.

As yet, my uncle and I were completely in the dark regarding our associates with the flowers, and as time went on and nothing occurred to alarm us I began to be more at ease, and even chaffed him on his apprehensive air. At that moment, however, the man who had watched us with so much suspicion got up, and approached our table.

"Good evening," he said, pleasantly enough. "You are strangers, I think?"

"Yes," answered my uncle, on his guard.

"From England, perhaps?"

"Yes," assented my uncle, like a swordsman waiting for his opponent's thrust.

"Do flowers grow well?" he asked, his eyes scrutinising us with what seemed to my alarm to be growing suspicion.

"As well as can be expected," answered my uncle.

Which I think must have hit the nail on the head, for our interrogator smiled a little, and at that moment there was a ring of a bell, and complete silence fell over the assembly.

A tall man, clean-shaven, and with an excessive stoop, rose to speak, and from whispers round about us we gathered he was the president. On his breast, and slung by a chain about his neck, hung a curious and very beautiful flower wrought in gold, with stones of brilliant colours for petals.

His voice was singularly soft and melodious, and I noticed that as he spoke his eyes rested upon us more than once, and with the same intent scrutiny of our recent questioner.

"Gentlemen of the Sacred Flower," he began, "I give you welcome." At which there was a murmur of applause. "Before we commence the business of the evening we must repeat our oaths according to the regulations of our society, and swear allegiance to the great cause we have at heart."

So far I had listened vaguely, like one in a dream; but when the speaker stopped, and I saw his eyes were fixed upon us, I began to feel a sudden foreboding of danger, and I noticed that my uncle had slipped a hand into his pocket, as though he feared what was to follow.

The president leaned forward a little.

"Gentlemen," he continued, "we have strangers, if I mistake not, and as an honour to them, which I know you will not for a moment dispute, I will ask them to repeat our sacred oaths first."

He paused, smiling towards us, and I knew instinctively that we were in deadly peril.

I glanced at my uncle, but his eyes were fixed upon the floor, and then I looked round the room, and did not encounter one single friendly face. On all was written the deepest suspicion.

My uncle rose very slowly to his feet, and I saw how one hand slipped the chair in front of him, and the other rested as before in his pocket. He never so much as glanced at me. His voice —rich, resonant, sombre—broke the ghastly silence of that noiseless room like a low murmur of distant thunder.

"Mr. President and gentlemen of the Sacred Flower," he began, "we have to thank you for the great honour you have done us in inviting us to take the oaths with which we are accustomed to open our meetings. That little

act of courtesy is more than we deserve, gentlemen, for I must tell you, though with profound regret—that I and my fellow delegate here have not come as whole-hearted supporters of the Society of the Sacred Flower "—at which there were harsh cries of disapproval—" but rather as the voice of the English members of the society, to recommend that certain changes be made in the constitution of this association."

My uncle paused, and there was an instant outcry of voices, some recommending a hearing of my uncle's grievances (whatever they were), others saying that we must take the oaths or return—which was, I felt sure, my uncle's secret hope, and certainly my own.

The president rose, however.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am sure we all sympathise with our fellow-members' difficult position, but we cannot make any inquiry into the course they propose to suggest, or the changes in our constitution they hope to rectify, until every man has taken the oath, and I must, therefore, beg of our visitors to go through this formality."

He seated himself, and at that I gave myself up for lost.

My uncle rose with much composure, however.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I cannot but regard this as compulsion, and an act which my colleague and I stoutly deprecate. It is with profound regret I take this stand on principle. Gentlemen, we must refuse to take the oath, and must return at once to England, to learn the views of our colleagues on the matter."

He sat down at that, and looked like a man justly indignant and hurt at such treatment, and my hopes rose again as I saw the room divided into arguing sections, some saying we were perfectly right to take our stand, and others that we were not worthy to belong to the society. Then the man who had questioned us went up to the president, and whispered something in his ear, to which he nodded, and held up a hand for peace.

"Gentlemen," he said, "before we go any further, will you answer us one question?"

"Certainly," replied my uncle, "if it is in conjunction with our principles."

"Quite," answered the president, an evil light in his eye. "What is understood to be the aim of our society?"

I could not avoid looking at my uncle at that, for I felt my heart thump in my breast with despair and tension, and could sit still no longer. His hand gripped the chair so strongly that I heard the wood crack in the absolute quiet, and the man who had first spoken to us noticed it, too, for he smiled slily to himself, as though vastly tickled with something.

My uncle stood like a statue for what must have been a full half-minute, then he whispered to me, without turning his head:—

"Alan, we're done! The door—quick!" And began to move round the table as he did so.

I leaped to my feet, and turned on the instant, and a tremendous turmoil of voices rose at once, above which the president's cries of "Police spies!" were predominant.

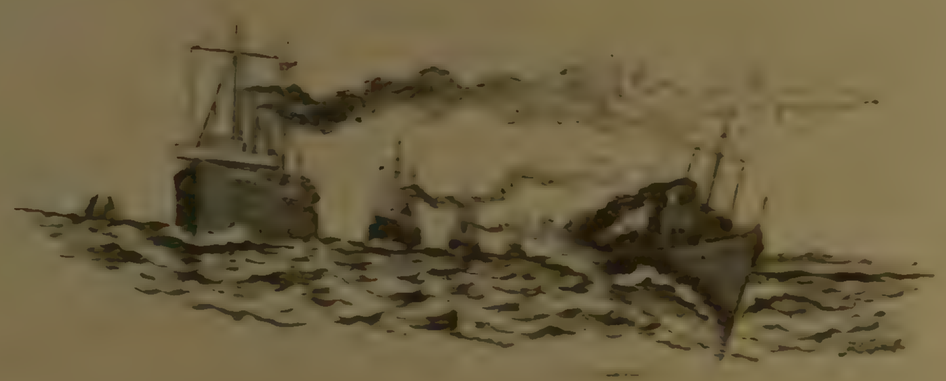
We reached the door with a rush, and my uncle faced the crowd of furious faces, his chair swinging loose in his hands, while I grasped the handle.

"Quick, boy!" he cried; but I pulled and turned desperately.

"It's locked!" I answered, tugging in vain.

"Oh, Alan!" was all he replied; then, throwing away the chair, he faced the infuriated crowd before him, and as he did so a shot splintered the wood beside my head.

(To be continued.)



Two Coloursmen

Telling in what strange circumstances they encountered an "Old Boy," and what came of the meeting

By J. B. RAYMOND

"LOOKS all right, doesn't it?" said Acland, contemplating a brightly hued Colours cap reposing on the table. Actually, there were two caps there, but Acland only saw the one on the right.

"Spiffing!" replied Harding, perched like a Turkish youth in a basket-chair. At the present moment he also suffered from defective vision, the cap on the left being the only one visible to him.

There they lay in all their glory; the summit of schoolboy ambition—trophies striven for desperately by the many, attained by the few; so much silk, so much velvet.

Acland (irreverently known as "Springbok") and Harding had been granted Winwaedfield first fifteen colours this just-ended Lent term, and they were now ensconced in the former's den at his country home. Harding's parents lived in India, so he had thankfully accepted his chum's invitation to spend the Easter holidays with his people. Easter was now two days distant, and on this particular evening the rest of the Acland family had motored off to pay a visit to a neighbouring and particularly acid maiden aunt. Acland Junior's strong inventive power had stood him in good stead, and as the red tail-light of the car disappeared he assured Harding that the latter could never realise the vastness of the debt he owed him in being saved that visit.

"Expect it was my game against St. Austell's that fairly made me a cert. for colours," observed Acland, meditatively.

Harding evinced a most reprehensible lack of interest in the remark; but went on to hazard the opinion that it was his try against Queen's College that placed him in the running for the coveted silk and velvet. Then they fell to discussing famous tries of past years—So-and-so's try, or So-and-so's try.

"But *that* was the try!" said Acland, throwing himself back in his chair.

"Not a bit of doubt about that, Springbok!" agreed Harding, although his chum had not yet given the try a specific name.

"Franklin's try!" they said, simultaneously.

Franklin had been one of those players whose achievements made an epoch in a school's history. At Winwaedfield they did not think of A.D., but rather of A.F.

"'Twas in '79. Pater was captain of the fifteen that year," said Acland for the hundredth time. "All right, isn't it, me getting colours, or the pater might have got a bit sidey? 'Twas the last game of the season against Old Winwaedfieldians, who'd brought down two Internationals. The school hadn't been licked that year, and five minutes from time were two points behind. Franklin got the ball——"

"In the school twenty-five," chanted Harding, like one of the old Northern skalds.

"Swerved past——"

Here the saga was interrupted by the entry of Benson, a hoary retainer of the Acland family, bearing a pile of letters.

"Police found out who stole those things from Moorlands, Benson?" inquired Acland, taking the letters.

"No, sir," replied Benson. "They think there's some connection with the burglary at Stanton Hall a fortnight ago, and advise us to keep a sharp look-out."

"Do they?" said Harding, grimly.

"Yes, sir," replied the correct Benson.

"So there's a chance of your waking up, Benson, with your throat cut from ear to ear one of these mornings?" observed Acland, jocularly.

"Yes, sir," replied Benson, with true servants' hall serenity, and glided noiselessly away.

"Well!" said Acland, "if any Bill Sikes shows his face here——"

Two sinister smiles completed the sentence.

"Can you hear singing?" inquired Harding, a few moments later.

Acland walked to the curtained window and threw it open; the den was at the rear of the house, and gave on to a shrubbery. Acland remained behind the curtain quite a long time.

"Well?" said Harding, impatiently.

The only reply was a long, sibilant "Sh-h-h-h-h-h!" Then came a whisper from behind the curtain.

"Two hockey-sticks—electric torch! Switch off light. Qui-i-i-etly!"

Harding did not stop to ask why, but obeyed, and then cautiously made his way to Acland, behind the curtain.

"What's up, Springbok?"

"Listen!" was the whisper.

It was the only thing that could be done, as there was no moon. Harding could hear the breathing of his companion, the faint ticking of his own watch, and the loud beating of his own heart; nothing more. But he waited on, hoping that Acland's ear might prove more sensitive.

"H'm!" breathed Acland at last.

Harding felt rising in his breast a sensation much akin to one he experienced on seeing "Postponed" scrawled across a match announcement. Acland began to fumble with the curtains.

Snap-p-p!

This sound sent both boys' hearts into their throats. It was unmistakable; nothing but a breaking twig could have made it.

"Farther off than before!" hissed Acland, getting through the window, and softly leaping to the ground. "Put your foot here—qui-i-iet! Lean on my shoulder—now!" And Harding stood by his chum's side.

Another sound of a snapping twig broke the silence.

"We'll stick to the paths to avoid dry branches. I know 'em—he doesn't." And down the paths they went. A continuous rustling sound could now be easily heard.

"Seems to be heading for the stables," muttered Acland. "He'll have to cross this path a bit further down."

They advanced a few steps, and waited; the rustling of branches could be heard just the other side of the hedge.

"Get ready!" whispered Acland, and the next moment someone stepped on to the path.

The electric torch blazed out, revealing the figure of a man for an instant, and then both boys threw themselves blindly forward. The struggle was sharp and long, for the fellow struggled desperately, though he made no sound whatever; but at last came an end.

"Harding!" said the prostrate Acland.

"Hullo!" replied Harding, from a similar position.

"It isn't your two legs I've got hold of, is it?"

"No," replied Harding, after pausing to ascertain. "It isn't your waist I've got my arms round, is it?"

"As a matter of fact, it is, old chap."

"Don't matter! If that's the case then I'm sitting on the other gent."

The torch had been lost in the struggle.

"Take hold of his arm, Harding; I'll get the other!" In this manner the trio rose to its feet.

"Now, you!" said Acland. "No nonsense!"

"None at all; don't want to frighten the women in the house!" came the voice of the unknown—impudent and reckless, but no street arab's. Schoolboys, however, are not very observant under circumstances similar to our two friends'.

"Don't you worry about the women, old boy," said Harding. "We'll see that they're all right. Now, come on!"

Back to the window of the den they went, and hoisted their capture through it. Acland shut the window behind them.

"Up with the light, Harding!"

Harding switched on the electric light, thus revealing the miscreant. His age might have been fifty. He was not in rags, although his clothes were threadbare; his face wore a look of such impudent and reckless defiance that the boys set him down as a most abandoned rascal without any more ado.

"No necessity to cling to my arm, young gentleman," he said, condescendingly; "I can't very well bolt."

Acland looked at him a moment, and then released him.

"Hallo!" he cried, as his eye fell on the two caps. "Yours?" He turned to Harding.

"Quite so," observed Harding, grandiloquently.

"One's mine!" put in Acland.

"H'm! Very pretty bits of rag," was the insolent comment.

"What?" cried Harding, giving a tighter grip to his hockey-stick.

"You're an impudent——" began Acland, then he turned to Harding with a contemptuous shrug. "After all, how can such a fellow understand?"

The fellow laughed.

"Yes," went on Acland, thoroughly nettled by that laugh; "things honestly won can't

be properly understood by gentlemen of your fraternity."

The man looked ugly for a moment, but the dare-devil look returned.

"Not much use to you, anyhow," was the off-hand remark.

"Look at that again!" said Harding. "Use, indeed! It's no doubt amazing to you, my good—er—that is, my bad fellow——"

"Ha, ha! Very good," interjected the tickled Acland.

"Amazing that there *are* people in this world who value things for what they *mean*, not for what they are worth. And those caps, the reward of years of hard, honest work——"

"No, my dear chap, not work——" began the criminal.

"Don't you call me 'my dear chap'!" flared out Harding.

"Boy, then!" retorted the man. "Honest play, if you like; work hasn't come into your life yet, and I can tell you, there's no colours given for honest work. Look at me!"

The impudent look had gone from his face. Boys are not very observant.

"Honest work! Look at me," said Acland. "Harding, that's too rich!" And the two went off into guffaws.

The man sprang two steps forward, then stopped as two hockey-sticks quivered in the air.

"Look here!" said Acland, ominously, "I don't want a fuss among the servants, so I'm keeping you here till my pater comes home; he's a J.P.——"

"So was mine!" interposed the wearer of the threadbare clothes.

"Your impudence is becoming a bit stale," was the long-suffering comment of Harding.

Acland rang for Benson, but only opened the door to that worthy to the extent of three inches.

Both boys threw themselves blindly forward as for an instant the electric torch blazed out. The struggle was sharp and long, for the man struggled desperately.

"Benson," he said, "as soon as my father comes home, tell him I'd like to see him *here*—at once."

"Yes, sir!"

"You understand? Here—at once!"

"Perfectly, sir," and Benson departed.

"Now," said Acland, locking the door, "there's worse places to wait in than here, so you keep yourself quiet and to yourself."

"Don't mind my looking at the photographs, I hope?" was the reply.

Acland made no answer, and the stranger began to scrutinise the walls.

"Winwaedfield—er—um!"

He looked round hurriedly, but the boys, who had shifted their chairs in front of the window, were engaged in a hot discussion concerning off-side, and took no heed of his exclamation.

"Hallo! Team of 1879. Suppose your father was at Winwaedfield in 1879, eh?"

No answer. The man shrugged his shoulders, and began whistling.

Acland looked up.

"I say, if you must whistle, don't whistle 'Forty Years On,' as we think rather a lot of that song at our school. It's only meant for public school men, you know."

The whistling did not stop.

"That's the worst of school songs," observed Harding, witheringly. "You never know what mouths they may come down to."

The whistling took on a slight tremolo, then went on clearer than before.

"You must drop that, you know!" said Acland, decisively. "It makes me feel ashamed—as a Winwaedfieldian."

"Oh, if you put it that way!" And the whistling stopped.

The discussion concerning off-side recommenced.

"No!" observed Acland, decisively. "It may not be technically off-side, but it's off-side in the spirit of the game. Rugger's Rugger, not a book of rules. Don't forget the Winwaedfield motto." And he quoted the sublime Latin phrase.

In accordance with a time-honoured Winwaedfield custom, both boys raised the hand to the forehead.

The law-breaker raised his hand—to rub his nose.

"My word!" observed Acland, in an undertone. "Thought he was going to give the salute."

"No," replied Harding, in similar tones, "the danger-signal lamp in his face needed attention."

Harding was always one for exaggerating.

The man stared at the photographs some time longer, and then suddenly turned towards Acland.

"Look here," he said, "you're from Winwaedfield. Then let me go!"

"Funking already," commented Harding.

"Never funked in my life!" retorted the night-wanderer. "It's because of another reason—a most important reason."

Harding laughed heartily.

"Why my being a Winwaedfieldian should be a reason for letting you go, I don't know," said Acland. "I'll say this, though—I wouldn't have made such a fuss under ordinary circumstances. But lately, several burglaries have——"

The man staggered.

"But—but—you don't think *I*—*I*——" His voice trailed off into mere sounds.

"If we hadn't heard of the burglaries I don't think we'd have nabbed you, sonny," observed Harding.

"Very well—as you please," said the man, the old impudence coming back again.

"Exactly!" cut in Harding.

The off-side discussion again commenced.

"But my dear chap," protested Harding, thinking to bottle his friend once for all, "when he scored his try, Franklin——"

"What was that?" cried the suspect, wheeling suddenly.

"Very nasty habit you've got of interrupting!" observed Acland.

"What the policeman has Franklin to do with a ragamuffin like you?" snarled Harding.

His clinching argument had been largely spoiled by the untimely interruption, and the young gentleman naturally resented it.

The ragamuffin looked at him for a moment, and then said, lightly:—

"Nothing—at least I almost believe so."

"Then shut up!" observed Harding, elegantly. "As I was saying, Springbok, when Franklin"—here Harding paused, and eyed the interrupting fellow invitingly, but he seemed oblivious of everything at present, his eyes fixed on the floor—"when Franklin started to run he was really five yards off-side——"

"*He was not!*"

In such a lion-like manner were these words pronounced that the two boys involuntarily looked for a fourth occupant. But they did not look carefully enough.

It was a different man who now stood before them. He seemed to have grown bigger; his eyes gleamed, and a flush burned in the hollow cheek.

"When Franklin started his run for that try, he was five yards behind the scrum in his own twenty-five. He handed off three opponents, then kicked just over the heads of the threes, grabbed the ball again——"

The words came out like a mountain-torrent. The boys found themselves listening to a man.

graphic and minute account of Franklin's try from this vagabond than they had ever heard before; even from Acland Senior, who had been captain in that illustrious year.

"On, on; nearly done, and the line only ten yards away; over goes their full-back, but lost time. Three of 'em fast gaining, I can hear 'em; one more spurt! Up, Winwaedfield! *Now!* Over, with three men on top!"

At the man's insolent remark Harding gripped his hockey stick tighter, but their prisoner only laughed. "Very pretty bits of rag!" he repeated, referring to their Winwaedfield caps.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" shouted the boys, involuntarily, waving their bright new colours caps.

"Hurrah!" echoed the ragamuffin, waving another colours cap.

Old and faded.

An awkward silence followed.

The two boys, recollecting a few remarks of the evening, felt a sick sort of feeling rising in the breast. The unknown looked confused.

"I beg your pardon," he said, hurriedly, and replaced the colours cap in his breast pocket.

"Look here," gasped Acland, "who are you?"

There was a loud rapping at the door. Acland unlocked it, and let in his pater, who behaved most peculiarly.

"Franklin!" he exclaimed.

"Acland!" this from the suspected burglar.

The boys gulped, and left the room as quickly and quietly as they could.

"My dear chap," observed Acland Senior, walking over to the man in threadbare clothes—his own tailor was in Bond Street; "my dear chap, what's the meaning of it all?"

"Very simple," replied Franklin, with a feeble effort at brazening it out. "It seems some burglaries have taken place in this neighbourhood. Possibly by myself——"

"Rubbish!" was the pithy comment of the other.

"Your son—whom, by the way, I congratulate on getting his rugger colours—your son is on the *qui vive;* consequently a hardened ruffian named Franklin is captured in the shrubbery while looking for a bed."

"But why on earth didn't you let us know you were coming?" inquired Acland.

"Two very good reasons. In the first place, I didn't know I was coming. On my honour," he went on, his voice undergoing a change, "I had no more idea it was your place, Acland, than the dead, or I'd never have dreamed of coming. In the second place, it was hardly worth while," his voice had again altered, "as all I wanted was a bit of straw and a roof. A habit, you know."

"Sit down!"

"I should be glad if your worship would deal leniently——"

Acland gave him a shove that sent him spinning into a basket-chair. Then he took a chair himself.

"Now, we'll drop talking nonsense—you always were a bit of a wag, you know, Scud."

At the last word, redolent of happy days thirty years dead, Franklin buried his face in his hands.

Acland waited.

"Now," he said, at last, "what's happened?"

There was no false jauntiness in Franklin's manner when he replied.

"Well, you knew the poor old pater—open heart and open hand—he died leaving just enough to clear his debts and a bit over. Of course, I had to send in my papers. I tried this, and tried that, just managing to keep my head above water, until I became secretary to a company promoter in the City. Got on comfortably for a while. Then he started a dirty scheme which would have meant the ruin of thousands. For my silence I was to have a substantial share of the profits—enough to set me up for life. Well, Acland——"

The sublime Latin phrase again rang out. Acland Senior raised his hand to his forehead.

The man in threadbare clothes raised his hand. And this time did not rub his nose.

"After that, you know what happened; his scheme was not matured enough for the law to step in. I, of course, was done for. Since that I have lived—er—how I can—honestly. Lately, the highest happiness of life has been to know I was sure of the next meal."

Acland was most unsympathetic.

"You're a proud ass, Franklin!" he said. "I don't mind your remaining proud, but you're not to remain an ass. You'll stop here over Easter."

Franklin showed his frayed sleeve.

"I've borrowed your football togs before to-day without leave," observed Acland, meaningly. "Yes, you'll stop as my guest. Mr. Franklin, an old school chum, come on an unexpected visit, Mrs. Acland."

"The boys," said Franklin, biting his lip.

"Say much?" inquired Acland.

"A little," replied Franklin, after a pause.

"Well, now they know that you are the hero of Franklin's try, there's no one will want the whole affair kept mum more than they," said the shrewd Acland. "As for after Easter, we'll see. I met Pitfield the other day, and he wished to know if I could recommend a secretary. Pitfield got into the Cabinet last month, you remember."

"That muff!" gasped Franklin, involuntarily.

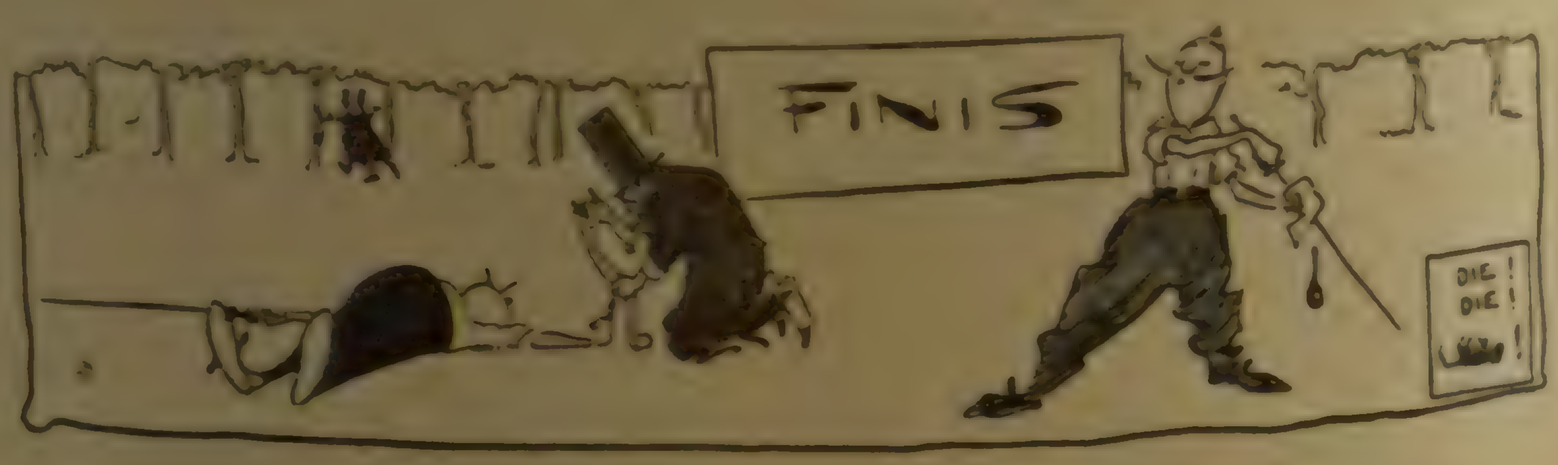
Acland laughed till the roof rang.

"We thought him one at Winwaedfield, I know; we were wrong."

"But—but he never touched a ball while he was there; played chess or something. And they let fellows like that into the Cabinet. H'm! the country's going to the dogs," said Franklin, with a pathetic humour which was irresistible.

"Upon my word, Franklin," laughed Acland, "I believe if you had your way your Cabinet would consist of a full-back, three-quarters, half-backs, with a sprinkling of scrummagers. And now, come along and change!"

Upstairs, Acland Junior and Harding, having specially donned footer-boots for the purpose, were engaged in solemnly kicking one another round the bedroom.



The RATTLERS of the "RED EARL"

By THOMPSON CROSS

Illustrated by Geo. Soper

"HO, Kingsley, me boy!"

"Hullo—Jim Pennington, by all that's wonderful!"

Jack Kingsley, ragged, out at heels, and sunburnt to the colour of a new brick, stepped over the pile of cordage that littered the dirty quay of Galveston, in the Gulf of Mexico, and took the outstretched paw of the grizzled, wrinkle-faced man who had hailed him.

"Down on your luck?" said Jim, gently.

"Not exactly a millionaire," Kingsley replied, with a short, dry laugh.

It was true. Only Jack Kingsley himself knew the long, grim fight with hunger and death that had been his for the last six months. He had left the old country two years before, a light-hearted boy. Now, leaning against the hot walls of the sun-baked quay at Galveston his mouth was hard and set, his cheeks thin, and his eyes sunken.

He had been up in Klondike for a year, and had done fairly well, until, at one fell swoop, all his hard-earned gold vanished—in the hands of a faithless partner. Then, sickening of the cold, cheerless wastes of the Yukon, he set out to walk to civilisation. In his memory the last six months was one blurred mass of hardships—of smuggling himself on river steamers, selling papers on trains, driving wagons over the Rockies, slaving his way, in fact, with hunger always snapping at his heels, through all the States of America, until, ragged, weary, and barefooted he found himself at Galveston, haunting the quays for what crumbs of work he could snatch.

And now came old Jim Pennington, the first familiar face he had seen for a year. They had met up in Klondike, when Jim was on his beam-ends and Jack's partner had not yet proved faithless. Kingsley had tided him over a rough period, for he liked the tough, grizzled old man—and he was English.

"Anything at sailoring?" Jim asked, abruptly, as they walked away from the quays into the shaded town.

"Been before the mast for a month in the Gulf of California," Kingsley replied, with a grim memory of the "coffin ship" he had sailed in months before until the very bottom dropped out of her, and they had to run ashore to prevent her sinking.

"Then, by George, you're the very man we're wanting! Will you ship with us?"

"Rather!" Kingsley said, with an eager gleam in his eye.

"Tramp steamer, *Red Earl*, for Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. Cargo four tons of rattlers," said Pennington, crisply. "Our old man'll weep on your neck. He can't get a crew for love or money!"

"Four tons of what, did you say?" asked Kingsley, staring.

"Rattlers—rattlesnakes. Why, bless your heart, did you never hear of the rattlesnake farms in Texas? Hundreds of 'em, all breeding rattlers for dime museums of the Northern States. We've sailed twice with a similar cargo. I'm before the mast, ye know—Jim Pennington always lets in the brambles. Bit of a tartar is old Sharrow, our old man; ready at nickin' a chap wi' his fist if he shirks, and if he falls ill he nearly throws him overboard because he's useless. But he's all right if you work. And the *Red Earl*—she's a peach. The boys in the fo'c'sle have a sweepstake on whether her sides'll rot away or her engines drop into the sea first. But, after all, she's no worse than hundreds on the coast, and we'll do right. Ye'll come?"

"I will, thanks," said Kingsley, gratefully.

"That's right, my boy. Get in, Tommy."

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This last was addressed to a little rat-like mongoose that suddenly thrust its nose out of Pennington's jacket pocket and waggled his whiskers at Kingsley.

"I see you've got 'em still, Jim," said Kingsley with a smile.

"All of 'em," said Jim. "They're my best chums. Wouldn't part with 'em for anything. Here, Tommy, Harry, Jacky, come and see an old chum."

From Jim's capacious pocket three noses were thrust this time, and three sets of whiskers waggled inquisitively at Kingsley. "Mongoose Jim" had been Pennington's name in the mining camp up in Alaska, for his passion for Tommy, Harry, and Jacky passed all bounds. He had knocked about in all the rough corners of the world; and always, well trained and intelligent, the three mongooses had snuggled in his warm pocket. Pennington would have starved himself to feed his pets. There was to come a time, and that very soon, when nothing but those three gallant mongooses would stand between Pennington and Kingsley and death.

* * * * *

Though Captain Sharrow, of the tramp coasting steamer *Red Earl*, did not actually weep on Jack Kingsley's neck, he was very glad to have him sign on before the mast. The ship was very short-handed — short-handed down among the old-fashioned, wheezy engines, in the wretched hovel called the forecastle—everywhere, in fact. But the night after Kingsley had signed on she staggered away from Galveston, her bluff nose pointing north, and black smoke from the cheap coal on the furnaces billowing from her squat black funnel.

Her strange cargo, the thousands of live rattlesnakes, were stored in perforated boxes in the ventilated hold, and a kick at their boxes, or voices near by, would set their vicious rattles a-springing, and send an uncomfortable thrill down the spine of the listener to think of the scaly death that lurked in each of the boxes.

Jack Kingsley soon discovered several things. First and foremost, Captain John Sharrow was a little beast, with fierce, bushy eyes, a black beard that worked up and down when he was in a temper—which was always—and a pleasant habit of referring to the crew as "them beasts for'ard." The first officer, a tall, leather-faced Yankee named Pike, was very deep with the captain—too deep, Jack, thought, for good discipline—and "hazed" the crew with a brutality that gained the captain's warm approval. Kingsley, on his part, worked like a slave, avoided the officers as much as possible, and at every brutal word snapped his mouth tight, and remained silent with nothing to betray his rage but a deepening of the flush on his tanned cheeks and the sparkle in his eye; and so escaped for a time Captain Sharrow's handy fist.

Three days out from Galveston the *Red Earl* ran into a storm, and staggered and lurched with creaking timbers dead in the teeth of the howling gale.

Kingsley, with the rest of the small crew, was kept busy enough down among the cargo, where lashings had given way. Some of the snake cases were threshing about like living things, and the rattles inside were clicking with fear and rage. But very soon something happened which put all thought of the cargo into shadow, for the *Red Earl*—rusty, mouldy, rotten timbered old coffin ship that she was—sprang a sudden leak, and as she lurched across the waves the pumps began to clank their song of life and death.

"'Pears that the sweepstake'll never come off," said Jim Pennington, with a grin, as he stood with Kingsley during a momentary lull in the work on deck. "The old girl's sides'll not rot away, nor her engines drop into the sea. She'll just plump down into fishland in one piece at the end o' two or three days."

Kingsley looked at him, startled. Pennington, at whom death had grinned hundreds of times without harming him, treated the matter as something in the nature of a joke.

"But the pumps are going," said Jack.

Pennington's grin expanded, and bubbled over into a low chuckle.

"As rotten as the *Red Earl* herself," he said. "Might as well give the boys a piece o' straw each, and tell 'em to suck the water out o' her and spit it overboard. No good at all. But, bless ye, Jack, ye don't know the ways of a Yankee tramp skipper. The rattlers below are insured for about ten times their worth. If the old girl did happen to go down old Sharrow 'ud get handsomely rewarded. In fact——"

He winked.

"Do you mean that the cap'n might have scuttled her?" asked Kingsley, in low tones.

"Well, I'll bet him and the first officer, Pike, know where the hole is," said Jim, grinning again. "I've been in a similar clove-hitch to this before, so I know something about the game."

"Well——" began Kingsley.

"Now, ye two malingerin' beasts, is this a At Home day, or a Parlyment House?" roared

"Captain Sharrow," cried Jack Kingsley, "Jim Pennington is aboard here, and alive. You can't leave us now." At that moment a great wave tossed the boat like a cork yards away from the steamer. "Can't come back—we'd get stoved!" yelled the skipper. "You'll be picked up by a passing steamer—perhaps!"

a harsh voice behind them, and Captain John Sharrow, his little frame twitching with rage, his black beard working up and down, and his little eyes blazing, strode up.

"Now you, ye old son of a lazy washerwoman, get to them pumps," he said, with a torrent of oaths, to Pennington. "And you, ye cold-faced Jack o' Union Britisher, follow him quick."

He swung round with his foot and caught Pennington a vicious kick with his heavy sea-boot on the ankle. The *Red Earl* gave a dizzy lurch at that moment, and the old man crashed heavily to the deck, and lay groaning with a smashed foot.

"You little brutal beast!" Kingsley ripped out, all his smouldering anger blazing in a flame at this last act of cruelty.

Sharrow turned upon him with a snarl, like the little tiger he was.

"Mutiny, by George!" he roared.

He jerked back his fist before aiming a blow at Kingsley. Then, as Kingsley braced himself with the light of battle in his grey eyes, Sharrow lowered his head swiftly and butted the young Englishman in the ribs. Kingsley fell sprawling.

He was on his feet again in a moment. A mist swam before his eyes, but through it, as though he might have been a mere spectator, he saw his fist shoot out, and felt it crack against the skipper's hairy mouth like a pistol shot. Captain Sharrow fell straight and lay alongside Pennington, groaning.

Men had run up at the sound of the captain's crash, and among them Pike, the first officer.

"All right," said Kingsley, quietly, the mist of rage all gone from his eyes. "I'm not going to resist. But look to Pennington. Unless I'm mistaken that little beast has broken his leg."

A moment later Pike slipped the irons on him, and took him down below.

* * * * *

The *Red Earl* was doomed. For four days she had staggered through the storm with the water pouring in her and making deadly headway against the rotten pumps. On the fourth day the water reached the furnaces down in the bowels of the crazy old craft, where the stokers had been working waist deep in the foul water, and quenched them. After that the pumps, insufficient before, were useless. The ship settled down rapidly.

At noon on the fifth day Jack Kingsley, in irons in the foul little forecastle-cabin, was called by one of the men to go upon deck. There he found the boat already in the water, with everyone aboard. The man knocked his irons off, and jumped into the boat.

"Get in, mutineer!" shouted Sharrow, casting a look of hatred at him.

It was evident that had he dared he would have left Kingsley to his fate on the sinking *Red Earl*.

Kingsley was about to obey when he stopped suddenly.

"Where's Pennington?" he asked.

Captain Sharrow paled slightly.

"Pennington's dead," he said, shortly, casting a swift, uneasy glance at Pike and the men in the boat. "Contracted *cholera morbus* and died this morning. Come on, or we'll leave you."

"Captain Sharrow," said Kingsley, tensely, "you're a liar—a black liar—Jim Pennington is aboard here, and alive this minute."

Sharrow started.

"Shove off, Pike," he called. "Leave the maniac aboard. We'll be swamped if we wait longer."

Some of the men murmured. But a great wave came sweeping forward, and tossed the boat like a cork, almost filling it. Pike, with a cry of "We're swamping!" slashed at the mooring rope. When the wave had passed the boat was yards away from the steamer.

"Can't come back—we'd get stoved!" shouted Sharrow, with ill-concealed joy in his tones. "You'll be picked up by a passing steamer—perhaps."

The wind swept his voice away. The men dipped their oars, and the boat swept far away from the *Red Earl*. Kingsley was alone on a sinking derelict with no other company but four tons of rattlesnakes, and—Jim Pennington?

Was Jim aboard and alive?

He went below and searched the ship, calling Pennington's name aloud. And in a disused passenger, amidships, he found old Jim Pennington in a bunk, thin, white, and unconscious, but alive, with Tommy, Harry, and Jacky, the three mongooses, peeping inquisitively from behind him and waggling their whiskers at Kingsley.

A sip of brandy from the captain's cabin revived him, and he opened his eyes.

"That you, Jack?" he murmured. "Where's Sharrow?"

"Gone and left us alone on here, and we're sinking," Kingsley replied, gloomily.

"Cheer up, Jack," said Pennington, with a weak ghost of his usual grin. "I'm glad the old man's gone. My, but he is a driver! Tipped me out of here three times, and me with a

Into the cabin glided half a dozen rattlesnakes, their eyes bright with rage, tongues flickering, and rattles springing. Then suddenly the mongooses leapt down from the bunk into the midst of the hissing, deadly snakes.

smashed ankle. It was only Pike's interference that stopped him from chuckin' me into the forecastle to die like a dog."

"We can only wait," said Kingsley. "Hullo, what's to do with the mongooses?"

The little rat-like creatures had suddenly scurried out of Jim's pocket, perched upon his shoulder, and sniffed the air, with their fur puffed out and their red eyes gleaming angrily. They stood thus, listening, for a full minute. Then clicked forth their angry war-cry, "Ricki-ticki-ticki-tick!" like the clacking of a tiny mill.

"Dunno what's the matter," said Jim. "They never make that noise unless——"

His face suddenly paled, even whiter than it was. "Listen!"

Afar off there sounded an ugly, hissing rattle. A moment later a dozen other rattles joined it in a deadly chorus, growing ever near and nearer.

"The rattlers!" whispered Pennington.

"They're loose!" said Kingsley, in low tones. "Has Sharrow——"

"Or else one of the boxes has smashed open with knocking against the others," said Pennington.

The mongooses were clicking forth their strange war-cry, and the sinister rattles drew still nearer.

"Close the door!" said Pennington, sharply, his weakness vanished.

Kingsley sprang forward. As he did so a hoarse rattle sounded in the doorway, and a great rattlesnake slipped like a flash of dirty grey into the room. He started back as half a dozen others followed.

Pennington sat up in his bunk, his face ghastly.

"Stay there, Jim!" called Kingsley, divining his purpose.

There was another bunk on the opposite side of the cabin, and with a gigantic leap Kingsley reached it without touching the floor, now seemingly alive with deadly rattlers, and hauled himself up to safety.

The whole ship seemed to be filled with the rattle of the snakes. To Kingsley it was like a nightmare, so suddenly had everything occurred. Through the open door every half-minute a great snake crept, its slit eyes bright with rage, its tongue flickering, and its rattle springing. Pennington's mongooses were fluffed and swollen with rage, their little eyes burning and their cricket-like cry "Ricki-ticki-ticki-tick!" clicking forth and mingling with the rattles of the snakes.

"It's the mongooses that are attracting them to the cabin!" called Kingsley, crouching in his swinging bunk. "They're mortal enemies, mongooses and rattlers!"

"Yes, by thunder!" Pennington replied, sharply. "And it's the mongooses who are going to settle their hash! Tommy, Harry, Jacky! Good boys! At 'em!"

The lithe little animals, with one last shrill chorus of "Ricki-ticki-tick!" suddenly contracted the muscles of their strong little bodies and sprang down from the bunk into the midst of the hissing snakes.

Tommy landed plump on the clammy back of a huge rattler whose hammer head and little, cruel eyes had been ogling him from the floor as he stood clicking on the edge of the bunk. The reptile had not time to squirm. Tommy's chisel teeth were in his neck. One quick shake of the little head and the snake's neck was broken, and with a shrill, triumphant "Ricki-tick!" Tommy had closed with a big, flesh-coloured fellow beside him.

Harry, like a little, light-limbed wrestler, was feinting and dodging around two rattlers which, with rattles sounding and eyes alert with fear and rage, were striving to get a deadly blow at him. But he sprang aside, and leapt into the air, and flashed around his enemies like a little grey sunbeam on the heaving floor of the cabin. And suddenly with a little gurgling "Click!" he leapt on to the back of one of them, broke its neck, and rolled under its quivering body to escape the swift stroke of the other. Jacky scuttled up at that moment and settled the other.

And so the grim, strange fight between the intelligent, well-trained mongooses and the great, venomous snakes progressed.

Kingsley and Pennington, crouching in their bunks in that rolling, swaying cabin of a sinking derelict, watched fascinated.

Pennington gave a hoarse cry as one of the snakes, with the swiftness of a lightning flash, shot out his head, and gallant little Tommy, with a last defiant "Ricki-tick!" stretched himself on the floor and died.

The procession of snakes had ceased. The cabin floor was strewn with dead rattlers, and Harry and Jacky were fighting desperately with the four that remained. But the battle was lost and won, and a moment later the last rattle of the last snake clicked out under the torture of Jacky's sharp, white teeth, and Jacky and Harry sat contentedly on their haunches trimming their ruffled fur.

Kingsley shook off the spell of fascination that had held him, and leapt among the dead rattlers. Pennington was in ecstasies.

"Give me the plucky little boys, Jack!" he said, holding out his hands.

"They've saved our lives," said Kingsley, tenderly lifting the gallant little animals.

"We'll have Tommy stuffed," said Pennington, huskily.

Voices and footsteps sounded suddenly above on deck. Kingsley, with a wild hope in his heart, sprang to the port-hole and shouted with joy. A mile away a grey-funnelled tramp steamer was hove-to.

"We're saved, Jim!" he said, and at that moment the cabin door opened and an astonished officer at the head of three men entered.

* * * * *

"And so, Captain Sharrow," said Mr. Arthur Maine, the keen-eyed, sharp-featured manager of the Mexican Gulf Assurance Company, "you

state on affidavit that the *Red Earl* sank in the gale off the Florida coast, after everything possible had been done to save her and her cargo?"

"Yes, sir," said the little captain, briskly. "Every effort was made to save her, and we only left her when everything was hopeless. We saw her sink when we were two miles away. My chief officer, George Pike, will bear me out."

"Ah," said Mr. Maine, his mouth twitching. "Robinson!" he called.

The door opened, and Jack Kingsley and Jim Pennington entered.

"Good morning, captain," said Jack, with a smile.

"How de do, sir?" said Jim, with a nervous grin.

Captain Sharrow turned ghastly, and sat down unsteadily.

"You!" he gasped. "Where's the *Red Earl*?"

"Towed into Savannah," replied Kingsley.

There was a dead silence.

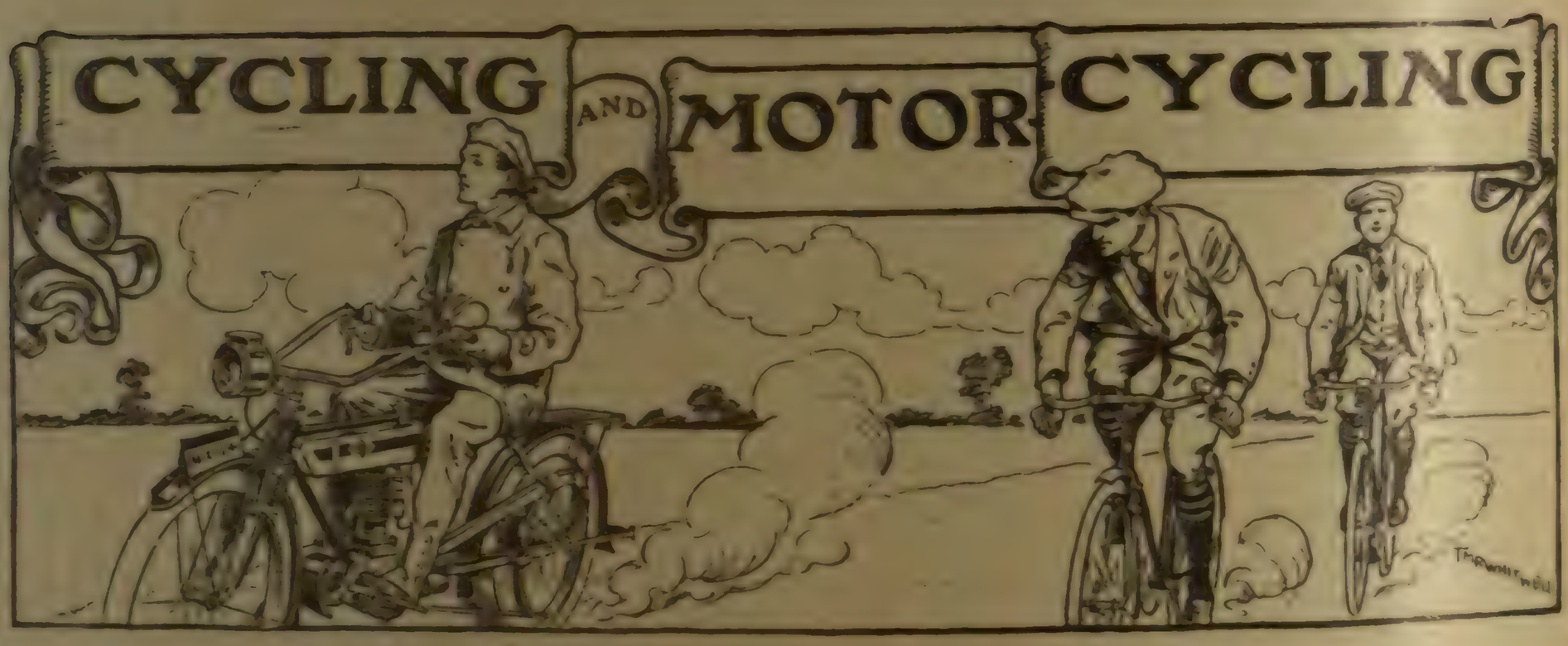
"The game's up, Captain Sharrow," said Mr. Maine, drily, at length. "Tomlinson, the snake man, with whom you had arranged to scuttle the ship, so that he might draw the insurance money on the snakes, is arrested. Pike, your confederate, has absconded. Very luckily, the *Orleans Boy*, from New Orleans to Savannah, got blown out of her track in the storm, and came across the *Red Earl* before she had sunk, caulked up the holes you had bored, and beached her. You will be charged with conspiracy to defraud my company. I say nothing about your desertion of these men. We thought at first you had opened one of the snake cases, but very luckily for you we found that the case had broken loose in the storm, and smashed open through knocking about."

Captain Sharrow left the insurance office between two policemen. Jack Kingsley and Jim Pennington were not forgotten by the insurance company, and shared the salvage money with the crew of the *Orleans Boy*. Mr. Maine, with his shrewd eye, saw the stuff that was in Kingsley, and gave him a berth in the company's London office, which he rapidly climbed out of to higher positions; and old Jim Pennington is happy as a king in the neat uniform of a commissionaire at the same office.

The Seven Ages of a Public School Corps

All the corps's a stage,
And all its members merely khaki puppets:
They have their field-days and their corps-
parades.
One warrior in his time plays many parts,
His ages being seven ages. First the Recruit,
Slow to think, and slower still to move.
And then the Private, late on parade, his
buttons all uncleaned,
His boots a week unblacked; and so he plays
his part—
Unwillingly, of course. And then the Lance,
Who, glorying in his stripe, doth clean his
buttons
For the nonce, displaying stores of latent energy
Brought out by his promotion. And then the
Corporal,
Full of wise saws and drill-book regulations;
Field-days his glory; with many a deep-laid
plan,
And thrice-bewildering map. And then the
Sergeant,
Proud as any general, seeking with eagerness
promotion
As colour to his rank. The sixth age shifts
Into a full-blown Colour-Sergeant, with tan in
hand,
Binoculars on side, his cast-off rifle now no
more allied
To his high rank. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange, eventful history,
Is Sergeant-Major, and long-sworded dignity;
A climax, *sans* only immortality.

SATIRICUS.



By ARCHIBALD WILLIAMS

Editor of "Engineering Wonders of the World." Author of "How It Works," etc.

CYCLES are benefited equally with rooms and carpets by a good spring cleaning. Winter mud finds its way into bearings and gears, and interstices generally, and even if the machine is kept outwardly respectable it will probably require a thorough cleansing internally, because the act of cleaning, unless done with such care as would be irksome to most people, drives particles of grit into the very places where they do most damage.

I have just been over my cycle in detail.

THE CHANGE-SPEED GEAR

In the first place the free wheel was decidedly stiff. I therefore unscrewed the oiling nipple from the centre of the hub shell, and with the aid of a long-nosed oil-can injected a quantity of petrol, revolving the cranks backward the while, until the liquid, heavily laden with dirt and grease, began to leak out. I then slung the machine with the back wheel clear of the ground and on the slope, so that the petrol should not drop on to the rim, injected another dose, and replaced the nipple. A good grind forwards on all the gears in turn ensured that every part got a thorough washing. The oil-hole at the end of the hub was then opened, and the machine laid on its side to allow all the petrol to run out. By this time all stiffness in the free wheel had vanished, and the mechanism ran "like silk."

THE CHAIN

While the hub was draining I treated the chain, laying it out flat on a board, and removing all the dirt which, in spite of frequent rubbings with a cloth, had lodged and hardened on the sides of the links. The outsides were quickly polished up with an old nib-card—practically a flat brush with wire bristles—but the inner sides had to be treated separately with a knife and a rat-tailed bristle brush. About five minutes' work sufficed to remove all the dirt. I find "dry cleaning" a quicker and more pleasant business than soaking in paraffin and drying-off; and I think it quite as efficient.

After cleaning, the chain was coiled, laid in a pan, and covered with thick lubricating oil; and, after ten minutes' soaking, hung up to drain. A rub over with a rag rendered it fit for handling.

When the chain had been replaced the hub was lubricated with a plentiful supply of oil injected through the hub-shell oiler. The cycle was suspended as before, so that the gears could all be brought into action, and then turned on its side for the surplus to drain out.

If time had permitted I should, by preference, have taken the gear to pieces, washed all the parts, and smeared them liberally with a thick grease lubricant before reassembling. The lubricant lasts a very long time. But in any case the free wheel should be well oiled.

If the free wheel is running properly it should not rotate the wheel (raised off the ground) when the cranks are turned backward.

BEARINGS

These, when once properly adjusted, seem to attain their adjustment indemnitely if the machine is a good one. Crank and pedal bearings require most looking after, especially those of the pedals, which get more mud-splashing than all the other bearings put together. The space between the pedal cup and the crank face should be cleaned out carefully, and the cycle be inclined so that when oil is dropped on to the crank-pin it shall tend to run into the bearing rather than drop on to the ground. A gentle spinning of the pedal will also help to prevent the oil straying. When the first dose has worked in, apply another, and then a third, and give the oil time to find its way down the pin to the bearings at the outside end, if you prefer not to remove the cap.

BRAKES

These should be the cyclist's very first care. I don't suppose that one cyclist out of a hundred realises how much depends on his brakes till they fail to do their duty. After one such experience he will have much greater respect for them. But prevention is better than cure, and mishaps can be entirely avoided if *both* brakes are kept in proper order. *One* may fail some time or other, but if the other be all right it will at any rate enable you to control your machine sufficiently to permit a dismount if the hill is a very bad one. Only last week a friend told me in a letter that he had been run away with down a notorious hill in Devonshire, owing to his back brake giving out, had been "unhorsed," and nearly done for. I expect that the brake in question, being powerful, had under ordinary conditions been made to do all the work, and the front one allowed to get out of order; with the result that, when the big strain came, and the faithful friend failed, there was nothing to fall back upon. Now, I make it a rule to have *both* my brakes at concert pitch, and to use them *both* moderately on a steep hill. This prevents either being taxed dangerously, and also gives the front wheel its fair share of the work of holding up the machine. It really isn't just to make the back wheel do nearly all the braking in addition to all the driving.

FIG. 1.
Monopole Cycle Co.'s handlebar with concealed brake-shafts: end view.

NEW BRAKE-BLOCKS

When a pair of blocks have worn down to within an eighth of an inch of the shoes they should be replaced. It is risky to run things too fine, as directly metal touches metal the brake becomes practically useless. If the fitting of blocks is beyond you, entrust it to a repairer. Make sure that the blocks bed properly on the rim, and that the adjustment allows them just not to touch the rim when the wheel is revolved.

OILING BRAKE GEAR

All levers, bell cranks, etc., should be kept well lubricated, so that the blocks may clear the rims properly when the levers are released. Cables running in tubes are a danger if neglected and exposed to moisture; one can't see what is going on inside the tubes. A vertical entrance to a tube should be guarded against water by tying on to the cable just above the tube a piece of rubber which will lap over the tube and shoot any water off.

A NEAT HANDLEBAR

Figs. 1 and 2 are views of the Monopole Cycle Co.'s handlebar fitted with concealed shafts to the brake-levers. This arrangement is very neat, giving a clear handlebar, and making cleaning more easy while protecting part of the mechanism. Another good point in the cycles manufactured by this firm is that the chain-stays run quite straight from the ends of the bracket to the back fork-end, which gives a maximum of rigidity in the drive.

NAIL-CATCHERS

A piece of stout copper wire strained across the fork or stays an eighth of an inch from the wheel will stop many a puncture. In most cases a nail, flint, or thorn does not pierce the cover and tube directly it takes hold, but is carried round and round and gradually driven in. The catcher will as often as not remove it before it does any harm.

MOTOR-CYCLES AND CHANGE-SPEED GEARS

In the olden days I urged readers to adopt change-speed gears for their push-cycles at a time when such things were regarded somewhat askance. Now that really reliable gears are available for motor-cycles I strongly urge the motor-cyclist to do ditto. The change-speed gear should, of course, include—as it almost invariably does—a clutch and free-engine position, that is, one in which the driving connection between engine and rear wheel is broken. The advantage of a free engine will be greatly appreciated by anyone who has to push his machine up a hill which he cannot, or prefers not to, climb under engine-power. Also, it makes coasting much more enjoyable; and—perhaps the most marked advantage of all—it enables the rider to start up his engine without running beside it, by pressing down a pedal, if the machine has an auxiliary chain-drive.

FIG. 2.—Monopole Cycle Co.'s No. 18 handlebar: front view.

So much for the free engine. As for the change-speed, the cyclist will hardly require an explanation of its advantages. I may, however, point out that being beaten by a hill when out

FIG. 3.—New Hudson motor-cycle front wheel stand.

on a motor-cycle is a nuisance, as just where pushing is most strenuous there you will have to do it. Should you have a side-car hooked on, so much the worse for you, if your passenger isn't equal to lending a hand. With a change of gear available you don't have to rush at the hill at top speed—which is dangerous where sharp curves are about—but plug along quietly on "top" till it seems advisable to drop gear and give the engine a new lease of pulling power. Some powerful motor-cycles are such wonderful hill-climbers that a single gear will take them up practically anything; but I am not thinking of them so much as of the moderately powered machine of medium weight, such as many riders prefer. Even cycles of considerable horse-power prove much more satisfactory, when it comes to side-car work, if they can change gear.

THE CHANGE-GEAR AND CONTROL

The change-gear makes starting up more pleasant. One gets away on lowest gear, and steps-up as soon as the engine has attained a good speed. On the other hand, the ability to reduce gear is invaluable when threading thick traffic. If the low gear is half that of the highest, one can keep going at a mere crawl, instead of having to dismount. On greasy and bad roads the crawl is often the only alternative to walking.

The prospective purchaser is therefore advised to get a change-speed machine by preference if he is likely to use it in hilly country, on greasy roads, through traffic, or in combination with a side-car. The last is the most important condition of all to consider, as a machine which will go anywhere with a rider only may prove very unsatisfactory when made to draw nearly double weight against a greatly increased head resistance.

THE ARMSTRONG THREE-SPEED GEAR

This gear, made in two sizes to suit medium and heavy machines, is manufactured by a firm which turns out one of the best gears for ordinary cycles, and therefore has very good antecedents. I see that the New Hudson Cycle Company has adopted it for all their machines. On high gear the belt rim and driving wheel revolve at the same rate; on middle gear the first revolves one and two-fifth times to the second's once; on low gear the belt rim turns twice as fast as the wheel. The general gearing of the machine depends, of course, on the size of the engine pulley relatively to the belt rim. If the first is adjustable the rider is given further latitude, and can suit his gearing—without, of course, altering the ratios—to the country in which he is travelling.

The clutch, of the multiple-disc type, runs in an oil-bath inside the back hub, where dust and dirt cannot reach it. It is put in or out of action by a foot-lever, mounted on one of the foot-rests. The gear can be changed either up or down without slowing or de-clutching; in fact, the more suddenly the change is made the better. This is a particularly good feature. If you want to know more about the hub gear, the New Hudson Cycle Company's motor-cycle catalogue (Summer Hill Street, Birmingham).

FIG. 4.—New Hudson 2½ h.p. motor-cycle fitted with Armstrong three-speed gear.

FRONT WHEEL REST

I am glad to see that several motor-cycle firms are fitting wheel rests to the *front*, as well as to the back wheels of their machines. Having never had the advantage of such a fitment on the motor-cycles that I have possessed and ridden, I am better able to appreciate what a boon it must be. Mending a puncture in the front tyre of a machine is no joke if one cannot raise the wheel clear of the ground. One may be able to lash the handlebars to a gate, but even to do that is a somewhat strenuous job when no assistance is obtainable. These minor improvements make a lot of difference to the comfort of motoring.

SPRING FORKS

I see that the Triumph Cycle Co. have modified somewhat the springs of the front fork of their motor-cycle by substituting one large double spring for the two springs previously employed. If the new arrangement (Fig. 5) is better than the old—of which I have had extensive experience—it must be very good indeed, as is every other part of these excellent machines.

FIG. 5.—Triumph Cycle Co.'s spring fork.

Answer to Correspondent

J. L. (Brighton).—"Banked" pedals are so shaped that the tread tilts a little towards the machine. The object of banking is to counteract the effects of the unavoidable lateral separation of the cyclist's feet, and to render it unnecessary for him to turn his knees out in order to keep his feet flat on the pedals. The principle is certainly all right, and I have seen it advocated in several places at different times. It is open to any reader to "bank" his own pedals by attaching wedge-shaped slips of rubber thicker end outwards, to the pads, or by binding string round the pads to produce a gradual taper inwards. There is a "banked" pedal on the market, and to the best of my recollection it is known as the "S.F."

CRICKET IN THE OLDEN DAYS

The exact date when cricket first came into existence is unknown; but at any rate it is practically certain that England was its birth-place.

It is probable that the word "cricket" came from an old Saxon word "creag," which signified a game played with a crooked bat. If so, the game was known in Edward I.'s reign, about six hundred years ago. But nothing really is known of it that is not speculative until the beginning of the eighteenth century; from that time its growth may be followed with ease.

The earliest matches of which copies of the scores have been kept were Kent *v.* All England, played at Finsbury in 1746; and Hambledon *v.* Kent, played near Canterbury in 1772.

In 1774 a set of laws were drawn up in London for the government of the game, and these are supposed to be the first written laws.

At that time the runs were kept by means of notches made in a strip of wood, and only two stumps were used. The ball sometimes weighed as much as 6 ozs.

There was at first no limit to the size of the bat, which was curved at the end, but as the bowling changed and became more destructive the shape was altered, leaving it even then inelegant compared with those in use at the present time.

For the earliest printed instructions for playing the game we are indebted to John Nyren (born 1764) and Lambert (born in 1779). Round-arm bowling was introduced during the lifetime of these two famous cricketers, and both looked upon it with disfavour.

After it had been practised for eight or ten years it was discarded altogether as being too much like "throwing." In 1825 it was revived however, but the hard and uneven surface upon which cricket was so often played then made it quite dangerous, and leg-guards and batting-gloves were used for the first time.

During the second quarter of the nineteenth century the game made rapid strides, and county cricket became more general. Some of the counties had matches early in the nineteenth century or even before, but properly organised county clubs were not known till many years after, as the following dates will show: Surrey, 1845; Sussex, 1857; Kent, 1859; Notts, 1859; Yorkshire, 1863; Lancashire, 1864; Middlesex, 1868; Gloucestershire and Derbyshire, 1870. International cricket dates back as far as 1859, when George Parr took a team to America. In 1878 Conway brought an Australian eleven to England, the first of its kind, but destined to be followed by many others.

E. M.

SOME BEAUTIFUL WATERFALLS IN ENGLAND & WALES

(1) Llanberis, North Wales: (2) Harehaw, Lyan, near Bellingham; (3) Stock Ghyll Force, Ambleside; (4) Thornton Force, Ingleton, Yorks.; (5) near Bolton Abbey, Yorks.; (6) Virginia Water, Windsor Park; (7) Rock Park, Llandrindod, Wales.

Photos, E. W. Jackson.

KINGSTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL

By C.E.THOMAS

THE spread of education in Elizabethan days doubtless inspired that little pleasantry of Shakespeare in *King Henry VI.*, in which play "Jack Cade" makes one of the heads of his indictment of the Lord Say: "Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar school," while he also condemns classical education in the words, "Away with him, away with him! He speaks Latin."

In modern days there has been a certain amount of criticism of grammar school education which might be considered a distant echo of the rebel's statements, and many old schools have been hard put to it to maintain their position in this commercial era. They are fighting manfully to keep their places, and will do so as long as those who recognise the importance of such institutions support them in the only practical way—by keeping up the numbers of the scholars.

The Grammar School at Kingston-upon-Thames is a good representative of that class of smaller educational establishment which in former years represented to the majority of parents the ideal seat of learning, where not only was a sufficient amount of classical and other knowledge absorbed, but also that admirable quality, the public school spirit, the value of which is apt, perhaps, to be overlooked in these days of educational democracy.

From the sentimental point of view Kingston Grammar School has a great claim on the district, for it is the first mentioned in any discovered writings as a public school; and present and past scholars are proud of the fact that their school was referred to in documents before the foundation of either Winchester or Eton.

In 1909 the sexcentenary of the school was celebrated by an interesting pageant at the back of the old chantry, the Chapel of St. Mary Magdalene, founded in 1309. The author of the book took a pageant writer's license, perhaps, in inferring that the chapel of the pious founders, Edward and John Lovekyn, was the actual scene of the school; but it is the most likely place, and, any way, as long ago as 1364 the school was spoken of as being an old one.

The occasion of one reference to the school at Kingston was a little correspondence between the Bishop of Winchester and the Prior of Canterbury, regarding one Hugh de Kingston, the worthy pedagogue of the scholars in the house of the Almonry of Canterbury. Master Hugh, while on a holiday in his native town, had been inveigled into remaining to teach the sons of his fellow-townsmen, which had "troubled and annoyed" the Almoner of Canterbury, so that the latter "seized and sequestrated some poor goods of Master Hugh." It may be hoped that Master Hugh did not vent his annoyance at the

action on the innocent hides of the youth of Kingston.

It is certain that, after troublous times, the school was refounded in the chapel, and endowed by Queen Elizabeth in 1561. The school pageant, the book of which was admirably written by Mr. J. G. Black, B.A., ended with a visit to the school by the Queen; and the origin of the school motto was given in an incident which was at any rate pretty enough to be true. The Queen, on dismounting from

The head master, Mr. E. A. C. Stowell, B.A.

her horse, walked over a cloak spread by one of the boys in the Raleigh manner, and the following dialogue ensued :—

Queen Elizabeth: "Your pretty cloak is spoiled!"

Boy: "Lest the marks of Your Majesty's feet should ever be effaced, I'll have it embroidered in letters of gold '*Hic incedit Regina.*'"

Queen Elizabeth: "To be evens with you, my pretty page, I will give you this motto to add beneath, '*Bene agere ac laetari.*'"

John Lawrence, the Master (to the boys): "Work well and play well, boys. *Bene agere ac laetari!* We will all take Your Majesty's motto for the school device."

The old chapel did many years of good service as a school, but fell into decay, and the modern building facing it was built in 1877. Eventually the old building was restored and reopened in 1886 as the upper school. The date of the return, May 12th, had been looked forward to eagerly by the scholars of the Rev. W. Elliot Inchbald, a true missionary of the public school ideal. It was not that the privileged upper school were imbued with a desire for archæological research, and wished to admire the carved stone head of Edward III. and other internal decorations, but there was a rumour that a subterranean passage led from the school to Hampton Court. The wished-for opportunity occurred; masters were absent, and a rush was made for a trap-door; but, alas! there was merely a cellar and a bricked-up wall, behind which, perhaps, that passage was concealed. Shortly after the reopening the school was named "Queen Elizabeth's School," but the present title was restored later.

After another period of active work the school was once more transferred to the modern building on the other side of London Road, and now the old chapel has been converted into a gymnasium, and the Sixth Form class-room at the side into a meeting-place for the Old Kingstonians' Society.

The chapel in which the "Free Grammar School of Queen Elizabeth" was placed is of much interest to the archæologist, for it is the oldest building in the district. Mr. A. J. Style, the architect responsible for the very careful restoration, thus describes it: "The chapel as it now stands is most interesting architecturally as an example of the period when decorated merged into perpendicular style. It measures internally 38ft. by 17ft., and the height is 20ft. The east window has three lights, and bore two well-carved heads of King Edward III. and Queen Philippa, though that of the queen has been recently broken and lost. In the east wall, near each angle, is a narrow doorway leading to the staircase in the turret. The west end, which was at one time very dilapidated, has been restored. The roof is simple tie-beam and king-post."

One does not expect the records of a small grammar school to bristle with the names of notable old boys, but the Kingston school has

sent out many men who have done well in the professions and in commercial life. In every number of the well-edited modern magazine, *The Kingstonian*, successor to the *Kingston Grammar School Gazette*, one may read of the latest doings of some quite old boy who has already made his mark in England or abroad, or of the early triumph of another more modern hero who has just mounted the first rung of the ladder of success. One famous old boy, Gibbon, the historian, must have had mixed feelings regarding the Kingston Grammar School. He was sent there in January 1746, before he went to Westminster, bullied as a Jacobite, and birched into Latin grammar. This was during the reign as head master of Dr. Wooddeson, whose methods evidently made scholars, for eight of his pupils found places in the "Dictionary of National Biography." Steevens, the Shakespeare commentator, must have been a contemporary of Gibbon. Mr. W. W. Asquith, brother of the Prime Minister, made an amusing reference to Gibbon at the last speech day, "There were probably few who would have picked out from Dr. Wooddeson's boys in 1746 young Edward Gibbon as the one who, when he grew to manhood, would make the name of his school famous all over the world. But the incident had some sort of comfort for ugly little boys who did not play games."

With regard to the modern old boys, the Old Kingstonians' Society is now firmly established, and has a good membership. It is an institution of the last few years only, and it has been found difficult to get into touch with many men who left the school twenty or more years ago. Perhaps THE CAPTAIN, which appeals to old boys as well as new, may be the means of calling the attention of some Old Kingstonians to the society? I can assure any Old Kingstonians of the eighties that they will find the club quarters in the old building even more comfortable than when they knew it as the Sixth Form room.

Kingston Grammar School Hockey Eleven, 1911–1912.

To summarise, briefly, the modern standing and work of the school, it may be mentioned that the administration passed last year to the Kingston Borough Education Committee from the governors of the Kingston Endowed Schools, of which body Dr. R. N. Goodman, a very loyal supporter of the Kingston Grammar School, was chairman. The work reaches a good standard, as a quotation from

the last report of the head master, Mr. E. A. Stowell, B.A., will show: "The school is divided into six forms and a 'remove' which stands between the Sixth and Fifth Forms. The work is so arranged that Form VI. take the Cambridge Senior Examination or London Matriculation, the 'remove' and Form V. the Cambridge Junior, and Form IV. the Preliminary. In the examinations last year the whole of our Form VI. already held the Cambridge Senior certificate, and the upper boys in the 'remove' were so young (thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen) that we entered them for the Junior again with a view to honours, which they duly obtained. . . . The Juniors gave us a very satisfactory return in the shape of two First Classes, one Second, and one Third, with distinctions in French (three), Chemistry, and German. It is also pleasant to learn that

A practice game. A tussle in front of goal.

whereas there were two thousand junior candidates, H. D. Scogings obtained second place in German, and R. E. Moreau seventh place in Chemistry, while we had three out of the first hundred in French." The Head of the school of about eighty boys is G. H. Stoodley, and R. V. Thatcher, A. B. Winser, W. J. Gould, and F. Tapson are the prefects, the prefect system having worked well since its institution in the eighties.

From the sporting point of view, the Kingston Grammar School was brought prominently before the notice of CAPTAIN readers last year by the success of the representative four in the race for the Public Schools Cup at Molesey Regatta. This was a good instance of the ability of the Kingston Grammar School to "play well," for the crew won simply by great keenness and a loyal regard for their coaches' instructions. They had very little experience on slides, and although I cannot describe their form as approaching perfection, there was sufficient real grit shown to justify the hope that in future the school will take seriously to the river as a part of the games programme. Previous to last year the school rowing had been confined to races at the Borough Regatta, the chief event being the fixed-seat four-oared race against Tiffin's School for the Lovekyn Cup, named after the founder of the chapel before alluded to, and presented by Mr. Percy Hide, an old boy and now a schoolmaster in India. This race was won last year by the Kingston Grammar School, and the success encouraged the crew to enter at Molesey.

Many old boys have won distinction in various forms of Thames sport, but the school river work has not, up to the last few years, helped much to future success in rowing and sculling. Now there has been sufficient incentive to induce the Kingston Grammar School to take at least a modest place among the rowing schools, and to let the red and grey be seen more often at regattas.

Swimming is given a definite position in the pastimes, all boys, excepting under special circumstances, visiting the baths twice weekly. Last year seven boys obtained certificates for swimming a mile, and nineteen others received certificates for shorter distances. In 1907 the swimming team was a particularly good one, and the school won the Seniors Challenge Cup in the competition for the secondary schools of Surrey.

In cricket the school does well against other schools with more material to draw upon, and in athletics the performances are creditable, while certain of Surrey's prominent runners have first shown their paces in the Kingston Grammar School sports. A few years back two wins in succession were gained by the Kingston Grammar School in the quarter mile at the Public Schools Sports.

It is in their winter game, hockey, that Kingston Grammar School has won its chief honours, and a representative team of old boys would take a great deal of beating, for it would be made up mainly of International, south, and county players. There is no school which has been such a nursery for healthy hockey infants. The old boys are the mainstay of two local

clubs, Kingston Hill and Kingston Grammar School Old Boys, and their defeats are very rare; while Hampstead, the old Ealing club, and others have gained considerably from the ready-made players who joined after leaving the school. S. H. Shoveller, England's centre-forward, is, of course, the star performer among the old boys, and G. Logan and N. Nightingale have both played for England.

Much of the hockey proficiency is due to the fact that the whole of the winter is devoted to the game, and no football is played. Many people may consider it better for all schoolboys to play football for one term at any rate, but Kingston has a great reputation in hockey, and—not unnaturally—the chief ambition of the school at the present time is to keep it, and not trifle with other games.

It is somewhat extraordinary that the school's name should be made athletically in a game which was only taken up as a makeshift. Kingston Grammar School was formerly a Rugby football school, keeping up the reputation of a town which has a superstition to the effect that football originated there. The story is that the head of an obnoxious Druid was kicked round the town, and so football started. In any case there was formerly a great annual football day in the town, when houses were barricaded, and the youth of the place battled in the main streets.

Rugby was played well in the eighties, and one old boy who made his mark in the game was J. C. Carden, who brought over the South African fifteen a few years since. Curiously, when arranging about their appearance on the Richmond Athletic Club ground, the secretary whom he had to interview was another old boy of his own period, O. H. Rockett. But Rugby dwindled at the Kingston Grammar School when nearly all the first team left at once. Association football was tried for a term, and dropped; and then hockey, formerly a wild playground break scramble (Sixth *v.* the School) with the old crooked sticks, was taken up as a scientific game. It has remained very popular ever since, and the influence of the Kingston Grammar School on hockey generally is written very large in the records of the game.

There is good organisation for the school hockey. Two elevens are run, playing mainly against men's clubs, and using the school playing-field on half-holidays. The Intermediates play after school on Monday and Thursday, and the Juniors on Tuesday and Friday, masters or prefects taking charge of these games. The constant practice and coaching which the boys receive make them expert stick-handlers, and it is no wonder that, even at periods when the actual standard of the school play is not at its highest, a boy when he leaves is welcomed in any club, for the usual hockey recruit, in less favoured places than Kingston, is distinctly raw.

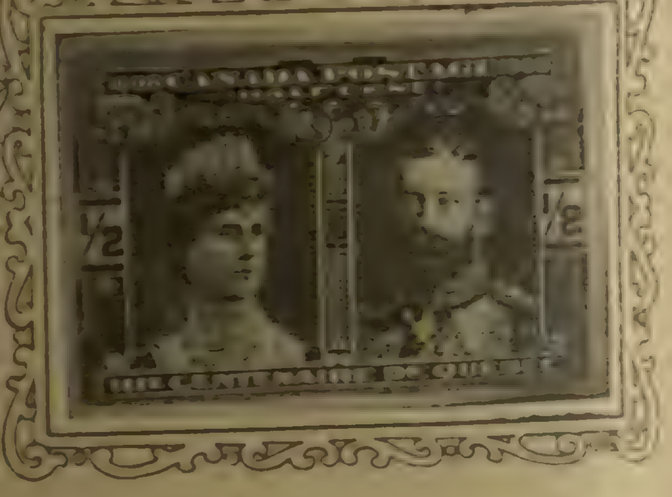
I have endeavoured in this article to sketch some of the chief points in the six-century-old history of a town grammar school, and to call attention to its work and play of to-day. An ancient past of sterling record, and a present full of promise, characterise the Kingston Grammar School. Its future, in common with that of many other old schools which are not richly endowed, depends on a liberal public recognition of the value of a town grammar school where there is constant endeavour to make men as well as scholars.

The school captain, G. H. Stoodley.

THE STAMP COLLECTOR

Edited By

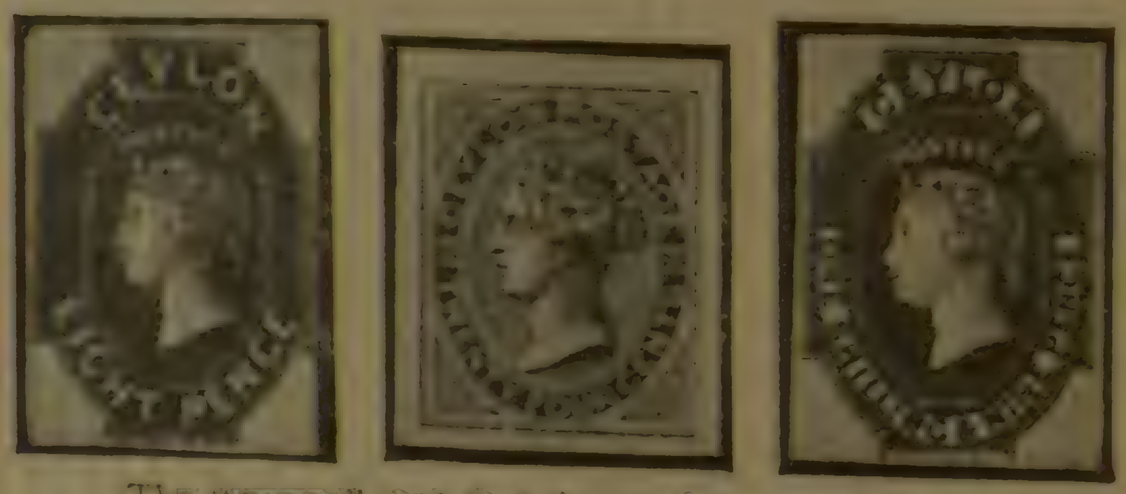
PERCY C. BISHOP



The Early Ceylons Simplified

IT is the fate of certain of the choicer early British colonial stamp issues to be so constantly written about, and talked about, and argued about by this, that, or the other eminent specialist, that the simple facts about them become submerged in a sea of verbiage. To this category belong the early issues of the Cape of Good Hope, Ceylon, Mauritius, Nevis, etc., but more especially Ceylon.

Not long ago I asked a medium collector—not a beginner—how he stood for "pence" Ceylons, and he exclaimed, "Oh, those? I haven't any at all! Guess I must wait till I'm richer!" And I dare say he voiced the feeling of a good many other philatelists of his own standing towards these stamps. In plain English, such collectors are "afraid" of the



The "pence" and first "cents" issues of Ceylon.

early Ceylons, and similar departments of philately, because of their supposed "difficulty"; whereas there is really no difficulty at all—except the price! And as the financial side of the question is an important one for all collectors of moderate means, perhaps the readers of THE CAPTAIN will welcome a practical suggestion as to how a representative set of "pence" Cingalese stamps may be got together.

The issues of 1857–1864 divide themselves into four natural groups—just four.

(1) The imperforate stamps: ½*d.*, 1*d.*, 2*d.*, 4*d.* 5*d.*, 6*d.*, 8*d.*, 9*d.*, 10*d.*, 1*s.*, 1*s.* 9*d.*, and 2*s.*

THE "PENCE" STAMPS OF CEYLON

All these are watermarked star except the ½*d.*, which has no watermark.

(2) Perforated, watermarked star: all the values as before except the ½*d.* and the 1*s.* 9*d.*

(3) Perforated but without watermark: ½*d.*, 1*d.*, 5*d.*, 6*d.*, 9*d.*, and 1*s.*

(4) Perforated, watermarked crown and "C.C.": all values as in Group 1, except the 1*s.* 9*d.* In addition there are the 2*d.* and 5*d.* in new colours—yellow and green respectively.

Here, then, we have forty-one different stamps excluding all shades of colour. A complete set of them in fair used condition would cost from £30 to £50, according to one's shrewdness as a buyer. Such stamps as the 4*d.*, 8*d.*, 9*d.*, 1*s.* 9*d.*, and 2*s.* of the imperforate issue in fine condition are among the "star" lots of the philatelic auction rooms, and the prospect of picking up stamps of this class at anything less than their acknowledged market value is nowadays exceedingly remote. So (you will ask) what is a collector of limited means to do? For answer I will describe the plan adopted by a moderately poor collector of my acquaintance, whereby he has obtained what he describes as "a good enough set" of pence Ceylons for a little over £6.

But first I shall remind philatelic Captainites that all the stamps of the groups described above are of unchanged facial designs. That is to say there are only fourteen distinct varieties—twelve values ranging from ½*d.* to 2*s.*, and extra colour-varieties of the 2*d.* and 5*d.* All the additional catalogue varieties are mere variations of perforation, watermark, or shade. What my moderately poor collector did was to obtain one stamp of each of the fourteen standard varieties, ignoring (as he expressed it) "all philatelic embroidery." Of the ½*d.* stamp he obtained a specimen of the imperforate, unwatermarked stamp—on white paper, not the rarer "blued" variety. For his penny he chose, of course, the fairly common stamp

with C.C. watermark, and so on through the list, choosing always the cheapest variety of each value. The following full record of his purchases will complete the story :—

	£	s.	d.
½*d.* lilac, imperf., white paper..		13	0
1*d.* blue, watermark "C.C."		0	6
2*d.* green, imperf.		1	6
2*d.* yellow, watermark "C.C."		2	9
4*d.* rose, star watermark, perf.	1	3	0
5*d.* brown, star watermark, perf.		2	3
5*d.* olive green, watermark "C.C."		5	6
6*d.* brown, watermark "C.C."		1	10
8*d.* red-brown, watermark "C.C."		5	0
9*d.* brown, watermark "C.C."		5	3
10*d.* vermilion, star watermark, perf. ..		3	0
1*s.* violet, watermark "C.C."		4	0
1*s.* 9*d.* green, star, imperf.	2	10	0
2*s.* blue watermark "C.C."		6	0
Total ..	£6	3	7

The 4*d.* and 1*s.* 9*d.* stamps were necessarily heavy items, but as all the copies he purchased were good, and in some instances quite brilliant specimens, he has every reason to be well satisfied with his expenditure, and can proudly point to his "pence Ceylon" page as one of the finest in his album. In addition to a display of his fourteen "pence" specimens, the album page carries neatly penned notes as to the other varieties to be obtained—if, alas! one only had the money!

So far I have referred only to the stamps of the beautiful line-engraved issues of 1857–1864. Two further "pence" stamps, 1*d.* and 3*d.*, made their appearance in 1867–1868, but these are common-looking things by comparison. There is an abundant supply of the 1*d.* blue, but specimens of the threepenny stamp in fine condition are a rising market.

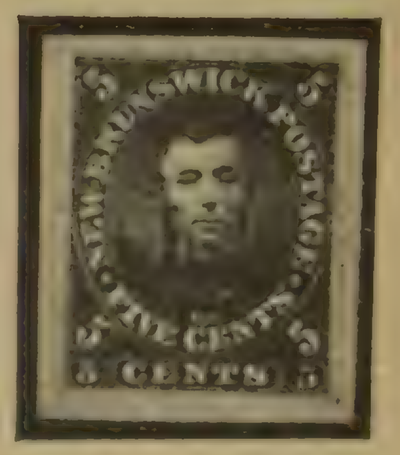
The change of the Cingalese currency from pounds, shillings, and pence to rupees and cents led to the issue of the "cents" stamps of 1872–80, which, with the exception of the high values, are still fairly common. And the rest of Ceylon's philatelic story is drab decadence, for in 1882 began a long sequence of surcharged issues which earned for the colony an unenviable reputation among philatelists. It is only the glory of the rare and beautiful "pence" issues that keeps Ceylon among the "fashionable" stamp countries.

COLLECTORS IN COUNCIL

THE "CONNELL" STAMP OF NEW BRUNSWICK

"Can you say whether the 5c. stamp of New Brunswick, bearing the head of Connell, the postmaster, is to be classed as an essay or a duly issued stamp? A friend and myself would much like the point settled."—*K. J. McD., Dundee.*

This is an old, old subject of discussion. I, for one, unhesitatingly throw in my lot with those who say that the "Connell" is merely an essay. The New Brunswick postmaster's scheme to issue a stamp bearing his own portrait in lieu of that of Queen Victoria was nipped in the bud by the authorities, who forbade the issue, and relieved Connell of his office. From time to time one hears it stated that used copies are known. I have never seen a postmarked specimen, but even if such exist it would not make an essay an issued stamp, for the "essay postally used" is a thing by no means unknown in philatelic history. Naturally "K. J. McD." is puzzled, in common with many other philatelists, by the fact that the "Connell" is duly catalogued in all the leading lists, and priced, unused, at figures varying from £25 upwards. Perhaps the "stamp" continues to figure in the catalogues out of respect for a long-established custom; perhaps, on the other hand, the publishers of these books think that to lower it to the status of an essay at this late date would be unfair to those who have paid high prices for their specimens.



The "Connell" stamp, for ordering which a Colonial postmaster lost his appointment.

FOR JAPANESE POST-OFFICES ABROAD

"I believe the Japanese stamps herewith are for use in the Japanese post-offices in China, or Corea, or both. Can you kindly classify them for me?"—*C. E. B. T., Lydford.*

My reader's stamps have been returned to him duly classified, but it may help others who possess "Japs used abroad" to know how to distinguish the Chinese from the Corean varieties, though the information is given in most of the recent catalogues. The ordinary Japanese stamps allocated for use in either China or Corea are given a black overprint in native characters at the foot of the stamp (see illustration). The two varieties of this overprint, for China and Corea respectively, I have reproduced, to assist identification, in rather a larger size than is seen on the actual stamps.

A Japanese surcharged for use in China.

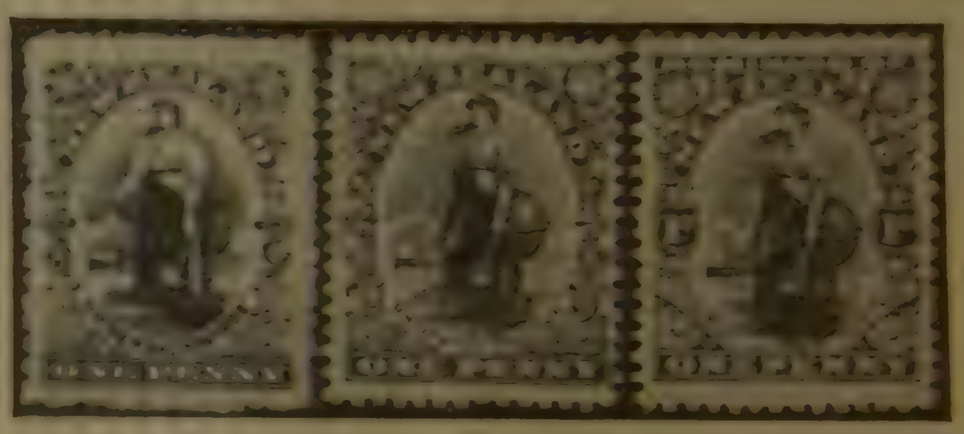
支那 CHINA. 朝鮮 COREA.

NEW ZEALAND: OLD AND NEW PENNIES

"How are we to distinguish between the penny New Zealand stamps of 1901 and later printings? There seems to be no difference in design."—"*Junior,*" *Dewsbury.*

The design *is* substantially the same, but the style of printing has been changed, and more recently the words "Dominion of" have been inserted above the name "New Zealand" on the granting of the more dignified title of

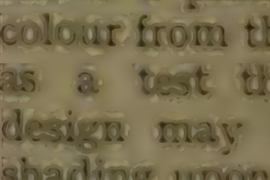
"Dominion" to the land of the Maoris. Let our friend "Junior," and other Captainites who have been puzzled about these stamps, glance at the three specimens illustrated here. They are, respectively, the printings of 1901, 1907, and 1909. In January, 1901, when the "Universal Postage" type of penny stamp was first introduced for New Zealand, the labels were printed from engraved plates, but as time went on this was found to be impracticable in the case of a stamp which had to be produced in such vast quantities. In 1907, therefore, the process known as surface-printing, or typography, was resorted to; and in 1909 the stamps, still surface-printed, had the name of country extended to "Dominion of New Zealand." To distinguish between the 1907 and 1909 issues, therefore, is easy; but the young collector cannot so readily decide which is the engraved stamp of 1901 and which the surface-printed of 1907. One difference is that the surface of the paper of the engraved stamp generally shows a pinkish tinge where it has taken the colour from the plate, but if this is not sufficient as a test the following minor differences of design may be noted. Firstly the lines of shading upon the garment of the central figure are diagonal in the engraved stamp and vertical in the surface-printed, while, on the other hand, the lines on the geographical globe are vertical in the engraved and diagonal in the surface-printed issue. The smaller lettering of the words "Universal Postage" in the 1907 printing is another point of difference. But "Junior" and others will find, after a little more handling of the world's postage stamps, that it is quite easy for an experienced eye to distinguish "engraved" from "surface-printed" stamps at a glance.



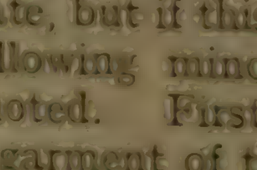
1901. 1907. 1909.

TYPES OF NORWEGIAN STAMPS

"A list in my possession speaks of Norwegian stamps with 'Norge' in (*a*) Egyptian, and (*b*) Roman capitals. May I ask you to explain this."—*G. F. T., Wanstead.*



A. Egyptian.



B. Roman.

Certainly. The Norwegian stamps of the familiar "posthorn" type have been in use, with only slight modifications, ever since 1871. There are many interesting variations, such as posthorn shaded and unshaded, but the principal variety, and the one most necessary to be understood by the young collector, is that connected with the inscription "Norge." I reproduce the upper portions of two stamps showing this word set in Egyptian and Roman letterings. "A," the Egyptian type, was in use from 1871 until the introduction of "B," the Roman type, in 1894. In certain instances this difference of lettering is practically the only means of distinction between one issue and other, so its importance will be obvious to all.

Norway: the "Posthorn" stamps.

"EARLY STATES" AND "LATE STATES"

"Sometimes rare stamps are described as 'early state of the plate,' 'late state of the plate,' etc. I am curious to know what these expressions mean."—*C. H., Junr., Dunstable.*

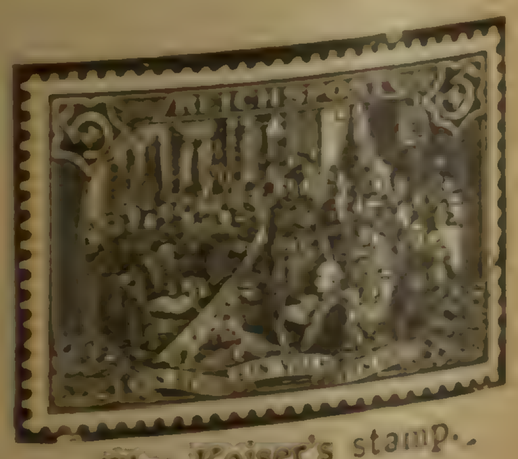
Well, "C. H.," this is not a matter that need greatly trouble the young collector, but it is interesting, and I will endeavour to make it clear. Let us take as our example a stamp of the "Post Paid" issue of Mauritius. These stamps were printed from copper plates, and consequently they vary greatly in sharpness and distinctness according to the state of the plate at the time the various specimens were produced. A stamp from the earliest printings, when the delicate copper plate was in its prime, would be called an early "impression," or an "early state," and then would come "intermediate impression," "worn impression," and, last of all, "latest impressions," in which the background of the design has nearly all disappeared. These distinctions are really of very great importance in connection with scarce old copper-plate stamps like the "Post Paid" Mauritius, for there is a vast difference in value between early and late "states."

A fairly early impression of a "Post Paid" Mauritius.

TWO TYPES OF GERMAN 5 MARKS

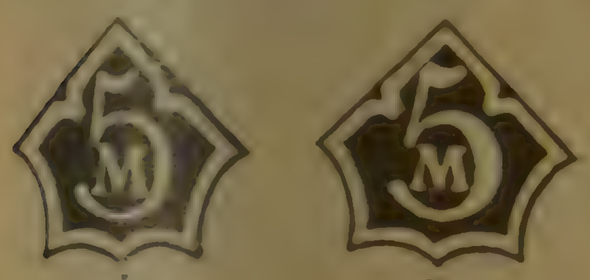
"Kindly tell me the differences to be found in my two German 5 marks stamps. I am told they are of two different types."—*W. M. P., Surbiton.*

An interesting query about an



The Kaiser's stamp.

interesting stamp. The 5 marks, 1900, of the German Empire, is one of the few stamps on which the Kaiser figures in person, that monarch having as a general rule declined to allow his portrait or effigy to be used for postage stamp purposes. There was a redrawing of the design of this stamp, as in the first type the lettering of value in the upper corners was deemed unsatisfactory. The enlarged illustrations given here of the "5 M" as it appears in the two types of the stamp will alone be a sufficient guide to the collector, as the differences can be seen at a glance.



I. II.

TWO KINDS OF U.S.A. LOCALS

"I am puzzled about the local stamps of the United States. In one catalogue you see only a few of these listed, in another pages and pages of them. Where is one to draw the line?"—*O. P. R., Leamington.*

Well, there are two classes of United States locals. There are the scarce "Postmasters'" stamps of Baltimore, Brattleboro, New York, St. Louis, etc.—stamps which are highly prized by those fortunate enough to possess them, and are unhesitatingly given a place of equal honour with the National U.S.A. issues. Then there are the numerous local postage stamps issued by private firms and individuals trading as carriers and despatch agents. The earlier cataloguers and album-publishers used to describe these curious labels as "Special and Private Offices." At the present time they figure as "semi-official issues" (whatever that may mean) in Messrs Stanley Gibbons' catalogue. Though collected eagerly and highly prized by American philatelists, they are very generally ignored by collectors in this country. For one thing, they are not very generally understood; but a stronger reason for leaving them severely alone is that copious supplies of forgeries (or "facsimiles," as they were more politely termed!) were put on the market in earlier years, and many of these frauds are still lurking in the byways of philately.

United States Locals.

United States: Postmasters' stamps of Brattleboro and St. Louis.

NOTABLE NEW ISSUES

Bolivia.—A new provisional stamp of 5 centavos has recently been created by an overprint on the 2 centavos stamp of the 1901 issue. The overprint is applied diagonally in black, and reads "5 centavos 1911." The stamp is an interesting exception to a very general rule of modern postal administration—namely, that the value of a stamp should never be *increased* by surcharging, as that is often a direct incentive to forgery.

Great Britain.—The tangle of varieties in our own postage stamps since the transference of the printing contracts has been appalling. The Editor of THE CAPTAIN having sternly declined to allow me a whole number of the magazine in which to describe all the different papers, inks, gums, etc., the only alternative is silence until the issues settle down into uniformity, when it may be interesting to have a general chat about them.

Liechtenstein.—This little scrap of a country has often been instanced as one of those that *might* issue separate postage stamps, and lo! the thing is done. Liechtenstein is a little state, boasting ten thousand inhabitants, to the south of North Austria.

Mexico.—All the stamps of the Centenary issue from 1 centavo to 5 pesos have been overprinted "Oficial" for Government use.

Spanish Colonies.—Entire new sets of stamps have been requisitioned for two of the small remaining fragments of the once puissant Spanish Empire—namely, the African colonies of Rio de Oro and Spanish Guinea. There is a new and up-to-date profile portrait of King Alfonso XIII., in which that volatile monarch wears quite a staid and serious expression. The inscriptions on the Rio de Oro stamps read, "Colonia de Rio de Oro—Correos," and the value. The Spanish Guinea stamps are identical in design and in every other point except just the inscription at the head of the stamp, which reads, "Terrs Espagnoles del Golfo de Guinea."

The values and colours for each set are: 1 centimo, rose; 2 centimos, violet; 5 centimos, green; 10 centimos, red; 15 centimos, orange; 20 centimos, brown; 25 centimos, blue; 30 centimos, pale violet; 40 centimos, green; 50 centimos, carmine; 1 peseta, red; 4 pesetas, lilac; 10 pesetas, black-brown.

:: "THE RECITS" ::

An exceptionally funny story which tells how a clever scheme failed to bring about the desired results

:: :: By RICHARD BIRD :: ::

IF Colonel Baldwin had not gone into his club on February 19th, 1898, the catastrophe of last year might possibly not have occurred. This may sound a little unconvincing, but it is none the less true. Colonel Baldwin had spent most of his life in India, and though he availed himself of his leave about every five years or so, he had never happened to be in London on February 19th for twenty-five years. On this particular night he dropped into the Anglo-Indian Club for dinner. After despatching the meal, and demanding the life of the club steward in exchange for some inferior curry, he went into the smoke-room. There he ran across a soldier friend who had been at school with him. They had not met for seven years, and the satisfaction was mutual.

In the course of conversation Colonel Ford asked Colonel Baldwin if he was going to the London dinner of the Old Dipcotians.

"Hadn't meant to," said Baldwin. "When is it?"

"To-morrow night. You'd better come. Probably you'll meet some old pals, and in any case you'll have a jolly time."

"All right," said Baldwin, being a man of action. "Will you get me a ticket? I haven't been to an O.D. dinner—I'm ashamed to say—since I went out to India. Partly force of circumstances, partly slackness. One forgets things, y'know, if one isn't at home."

They went to the dinner in due course, and Colonel Baldwin enjoyed himself amazingly. He was lucky in meeting three or four men who had been at Dipcote with him and whom he liked. The dinner was good, and the speeches commendably short, though fervid. Loyalty, of course, was the keynote of the gathering, and Colonel Baldwin went to bed thinking very kindly of his Dipcote days, now so far behind.

The next day, being a bachelor, a man of impulse, and having nothing special to do, he took a north-bound train and went to Dipcote. He thought he would like to have a look at the old place again, and see what kind of men they were breeding. He went, and again enjoyed himself amazingly. True, he met none of his old cronies, but the place and the tradition remained. He watched the school beat another team at football in the afternoon, and felt youth revive. He made himself known to the Head. The old man was justly described as a good sort. He took to Colonel Baldwin, and in the end asked him to stay a few days. At the end of the brief, but enjoyable, visit Colonel Baldwin shook hands very heartily.

"I've had a topping time," he said; "the best time I've had for years. Now I've retired I shall hope to see a little more of Dipcote. I had a good six years here when I was a boy, and—and I should like to do something to show I remember it."

"Very good of you," said the old man, smiling.

"I wonder if you'd let me give an annual prize for something?" suggested Colonel Baldwin, hopefully. "Not for sports—I think sport is a bit overdone nowadays—but for work, eh? Could it be managed?"

"You're very kind," said the old man. "There's not the least need, but still——"

"Then I'll write to you and fix up the details. Good-bye, and thanks very much again."

And he was better than his word. For instead of giving one prize he founded three prizes, to be given annually for recitation. One was to be open to the school, another for boys under seventeen, a third for boys under fifteen.

"Very kind of the old boy," said the Head as he read the final letter. "I hope his kindness will be appreciated."

But the recitation prizes, instead of proving like the pen that "comes as a boon and a blessing to men," were not popular—at any rate with a section of the community. This William Mellish found in due course.

* * * * *

Mellish arrived at Dipcote, aged exactly fourteen. Unluckily, he did not come at the beginning of the school year, in September, but at the beginning of the Easter term. I say "unluckily," for it is much better for a boy to start at the beginning and pick up his hard-earned knowledge then. Mellish was anything but a fool, but he was raw, nervous, and shy. He was proud, too, and his pride was a great help to him; without it there might often have been tears. As it was, there was only suffering—not bodily (for bullying was not part of the Dipcote tradition), but mental or spiritual, whichever you choose to call it.

Hali-way through the Easter term all the fags were sent for to the study of the Head of the house. They ranged themselves up in a line outside Rawlin's door and went in one by one. As they waited, Mellish heard his fellows discussing certain mysterious things called "recits" in disapproving tones. He had not the faintest idea what was referred to, and he was far too shy to ask. But in the fulness of time he found himself in the study. The great man—he happened to be rowing captain that year—was sitting at his table with a big sheet of paper in front of him, a pen in his hand.

"Hallo, kid! What's your name?" he said, seeing a newish face.

"Mellish."

Rawlins wrote it down.

"What are you going to spout?"

"I—I don't understand," stammered Mellish, blushing through every skin. Rawlins looked up in surprise—he thought everybody knew about the recits. He happened to be a very decent and human chap, though he was such a great man, and remembered how he had been nervous when a new kid. So he tilted up on his chair and explained the situation.

"Every year we have these beastly recits. They're supposed to be optional, but in practice all the new kids are made to go in their first year. That is, you've got to learn a poem or bit of a poem at least twenty lines long and spout it in Big School three weeks to-morrow. See?"

"Ye-es."

"Well, what's yours? 'Casabianca'—'Slave's Dream'—'Henry V. before Agincourt'—any of the dear old favourites? Give it a name."

"Please, Rawlins," said Mellish, nervously, "I'd much rather not."

Rawlins did not annihilate him as some fellows might have done. Having memory and imagination, he guessed that the prospect of reciting in Big School might be an ordeal. So he condescended to adopt a kindly tone.

"Sorry, kid," he said, "but I'm afraid you'll have to. It's been the custom for years that all new kids go in for the 'under fifteen.' Can't let you off. Shall I shove you down for 'Casabianca' or the 'Loss of the Royal George'? Both are dead easy."

"'Casabianca,'" replied Mellish with a gulp. He recognised that the thing had to be faced, and that Rawlins had been extraordinarily decent. So he went out of the study with mixed feelings of dread and gratitude.

The next three weeks passed like a slow nightmare. He had no difficulty in committing "Casabianca" to memory, but there were worse things, viz., rehearsals. Although the recits were looked on as a nuisance by all save a dozen or so enthusiasts (who fancied they had good chances for a prize), the fellows, one and all, were keen for their respective houses to come out on top. Consequently, a system of "coaching" had sprung up for all in the two lower competitions. The coaching was done by two or three of the senior boys between half-past nine and 10.15 in the dormitories. This was authorised by the house masters, glad to encourage keenness, and the extension of gas-light was highly appreciated. In some cases, of course, the coaching was non-existent—the coach simply heard the candidate his rep. without giving any hints on emphasis or gesture; in others, the coach had some real aptitude for the business, and his pressed pupils derived no small benefit from his adyice—not always unenforced by cane or hair-brush. Each coach usually had half a dozen "pups," and while one was being instructed the others, and anyone else who slept in the dorm., sat up in bed, forming an embarrassing and candid audience. It was capital training for the nerves of the hardier sort.

To Mellish it was the worst ordeal he had yet experienced. Far rather would he have faced a nightly flogging. Physical pain he could endure well enough, but to stand up in cold blood and repeat that rotten poem before

fifteen of his fellows was intolerable. The mere sensation of standing there and being not unkindly chaffed or criticised made him blush a vivid crimson, and his unhappy failing did not pass unnoticed. Luckily his coach happened to be Rawlins, who was not slow to observe his distress. Rawlins, after a couple of nights' endeavours to teach Mellish how to repeat the deathless lines, contented himself with hearing him gabble it off. At the end, when Mellish hurried thankfully to his bed, he would say, "Much too fast, and you don't open your mouth enough," as a concession to appearances, but he refrained from making Mellish give an encore. Whereby Rawlins became for ever enshrined in Mellish's thoughts as a superior sort of saint.

At the end of three weeks the dreaded day arrived. It was dreaded only by the pressed fags; the rest of the school welcomed it joyfully. Those who had entered of their own free will looked forward to a possible "pot"; the bulk of Dipcote were glad for two reasons—it was quite amusing to watch some of the candidates, and it meant a couple of hours off regular work. So at four o'clock Dipcote found itself sitting decorously in the Big School, masters with their respective forms, some forty or fifty earnest reciters giving a last look at their various poems.

The Head came in and walked up to his place of solitary grandeur on the platform, where he sat down. The masters produced pencils and note-books, for they constituted the judges. Each man put down opposite the candidate's name an A, B, C, or D, according as he thought well or ill. The final votes were compared later.

There was one merciful feature about the business, and that was the order of recitation. The juniors were taken first, then the middle-weights, and finally the cream of the school—the open class. Mellish, who was extremely hot and nervous, felt glad to think that it would soon be over.

The Head got up and briefly said: "As usual, we begin with the Under Fifteen Class. Corcoran, Junior."

("Names were taken in alphabetical order, then," thought Mellish. "Ah, well! it wouldn't be long before they got to M.")

Corcoran, Junior, aghast to find fame thrust upon him, stumbled to his feet and walked up the vacant space between the benches till he found himself on the platform. Then he handed his book to the Head—who filled the office of prompter if it were needed—and began to recite "The Song of the Western Men." Being laudably anxious to get through it as soon as possible, he fixed his eyes in a set stare on the horizon and galloped through it in a painful monotone. He got to the end without needing any prompting, and returned safely to his seat, careless whether he received a D or an A. At least the beastly thing was over, and he didn't care if it snowed.

Carruthers followed next, and contributed to the general good humour by falling on the stairs that led up to the platform. Luckily he was of tough spirit, and did not pay any heed to the ripple of mirth that passed over the audience. Luckily, too, he was ignorant of the fact that his tie was lying forgotten in his drawer, or else he would seriously have thought of breaking out of Big School by force. He chanted the "Destruction of Sennacherib" in a style devoid of sympathy or even understanding. The back benches received an impressionistic idea something like this:—

> "The' Syrian k'm down likea wolfonthefold,
> 'N's cohorts :. . . gleaming . . . purlangold;
> 'N th' sheena 's Spears like starsanthesea,
> Where th' bluewave rlls nightly 'n deepgallilee."

The next two, however, were distinctly good, and the Head's face lost its inscrutable look of gloom. The next man roused the flagging interest (for who wanted to listen to a good recitation?) by being prompted seven times. He accepted the help gratefully, and came back to his seat with an uneasy smile—as who should say, "I don't really *mind*, you know, and I'm sure I'm not blushing." A few more hopefuls followed without causing any excitement or interest, and at last the Head said "Mellish." The time had come.

Mellish got to his feet, feeling that every eye was boring red-hot holes in his anatomy. "Here, you've left your book!" said a kindly neighbour, and Mellish took it, blushing even more deeply than before. With an unheard sigh he walked up that horrible avenue, sincerely wishing that he was dead. His back was to the school, but before him was the consciousness that he must turn and face them in a moment, and that above all things he must not trip on the stairs. This last indignity was spared him. He reached the platform—or pillory—in safety, contrived to hand the book to the Head and point to the place, and then took his stand as bravely as he might a couple of yards distant.

Before him stretched an arid plain of heads and faces, all eyes terribly upon him. There was an unearthly silence, and he longed for a miracle—for someone to get up and say, "All

right, that'll do!', but he knew that this was impossible. At all costs the thing had to be seen through, and at the earliest possible moment. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and his throat was like a lime-kiln. He cleared his throat with a harsh rattle and began:—

"The boy stood on the burning deck——"

It is a pity that the self-conscious man or boy does not realise that his audience is not so imaginative as himself. To Mellish's mind every one in front of him was acutely aware of his inmost thoughts and sensations, cackling in a silent chorus, "The ass is blushing! The ass is going to blub! The ass has forgotten his rep.! The ass knows he's an ass! The ass knows that we know he is an ass! The ass is longing to be back in his place! The ass's collar is getting limp! The ass has a smut on his nose!" and so forth. As a matter of fact, the audience perceived that Mellish was blushing and was nervous—two common symptoms that a number of other prospective reciters were displaying at that very moment. But not a soul in the audience guessed at the conflict that was going on inside Mellish, and the tough struggle he was putting up, not a soul—unless some of the masters were imaginative psychologists.

"The boy stood on the burning deck," said Mellish, and came to a dead stop. He could not remember the next line, though he had been word-perfect for the past week. In theatrical language, he had "dried up." An apt phrase—Mellish had dried up.

"'Whence all——'" prompted the Head.

"'Whence all——'" repeated Mellish, vacantly.

"'But he had fled.'"

"'But he had fled,'" said Mellish, like a gramophone. Then he stuck again. There was a silence that seemed to last five minutes. It was really but a few seconds.

"'The flames that lit——'" the Head's voice went on, clearly and cheerily.

"'The flames that lit,'" said Mellish, hardly, and still in the same dull tone.

"'The battle's wreck.'"

"'The battle's wreck,'" said Mellish, with a slight break in his voice. He could not stand much more.

Mellish faced the crowd, and resisted a strong inclination to blub.

It was a good thing that the Head (and he alone) heard that break. A good thing; for if he had been dull of hearing and unimaginative he would have allowed Mellish to go on, and there would have been a scene. It might conceivably have been tears (for at that time Mellish was only a kid, you know), and that would have been worse than death to one of Mellish's calibre. He meant to maintain the Mellish tradition and keep his end up at all costs. But luckily the Head heard and understood. He closed the book and said in rather a hard voice (knowing that that was best at the moment for Mellish), "No good." Mellish took his dismissal with mingled joy and shame. He was glad of his release, but somewhat ashamed of his nervousness. Still, he had faced the crowd, and he hadn't blubbed. Not so bad, considering all the circumstances.

The rest of the recitations, having no special interest in themselves and no bearing on this story, may be passed over in silence.

* * * * *

Five stars separate this paragraph from the last, but they represent a space of four years. During that period Mellish grew in many directions. He became one of the great men, a monitor and secretary of the boat club; next year he would be captain of the latter. He kept a private cane for defaulters, had a study of his own, was allowed to sit up at night for an extra half-hour to "work," borrowed books from friendly masters with a comrade's freedom, and generally blossomed forth. He felt himself becoming a man; he could chaff or take chaff with a careless zest, and he did not know false shyness now. He had even cured himself of the trick of blushing.

But the four years had not effaced the memory of his miserable experience in his first term. He remembered his painful shyness with considerable clearness, and, as one result, he was always considerate in his treatment and coaching of young reciters. The compulsory system—as applied to the juniors—was still in force; and Mellish, being as conservative as the average boy, did not dream of altering it. Only, he remembered.

Also, he bore a never-dying grudge against the well-meaning donor of the recitation prizes—a grudge that he meant to see satisfied. At the end of the fourth year he felt that his time had come; he was a man of standing now. He could persuade, cajole, or compel with authority, and he knew it. He felt that his waiting was at last about to bear a goodly crop.

When the recits began to loom in the near distance again, Scott, the head of the house, lounged into Mellish's study with a blank sheet of paper and a pencil.

"No use asking you to go in, I suppose?" he said, casually.

Mellish looked up with a beaming smile.

"Oh, yes," he said. "Put me down for a bit of 'Balder Dead.'"

"What!" said Scott. "You're going in?"

"Rather!" said Mellish. "You see, Scott, I feel that I've been a bit of a slacker in the recits line—not bucked up enough—not done enough for the glory of the house, and so forth. So I'm going in this year."

Scott gazed on him in wonder. He was rather a dull-witted personage, but he was sure that he had heard Mellish slate those beastly recits often and often. Could he mean it? Could he be well?

"And what's more, old hoss," said Mellish, with a strenuous cheerfulness worthy of Mr. Roosevelt, "I'm not only going in myself, but I'm going to try and persuade all I can to go in, too. See? Jolly good notion, if we could get a record turn-out from the house—not only from the kids, but also from the grown-ups, eh?"

"Rather!" said the dull-witted Scott. "But—but, do you mean it?"

"To prove my words," said Mellish, seriously, "I will now go and call on Forbes."

Scott went off to his study, wagging his head. The thing was undoubtedly true, but—was it real? This was so unlike Mellish—but perhaps he had misjudged him.

Mellish was fortunate enough to find Forbes at home. Forbes, a slacker, but a genial soul, said "Hullo! Have some tea?"

"I have come," said Mellish, cutting himself some cake, "to ask a personal favour of my old schoolmate Algernon. To him it may mean little, to me—much; to the house and the cause of patriotism—everything—got that?"

"Yes," said Forbes, through a cup of tea.

"Good! I want you to go in for the recits."

"Not me!" said Forbes, decisively.

"I know the absurd prejudice against the competition," said Mellish, pleasantly, "a prejudice that must yield to common sense and time, I feel sure. You see, it would be a perfectly splendid thing if we could have a record year and get the whole house to enter. The other houses would feel that we have *esprit de corps*—a thing no well-regulated house should be without. Besides, you are a man of influence. When the news is spread that Forbes has entered, crowds will flock to the competition. You will set a fashion—think of that!"

"I'll enter if you will," said Forbes, with a grin. He, too, remembered Mellish's former strong opinions.

"Good!" said Mellish. "I have entered already. I know you are a man of honour and of your word, so I shall now go and approach Holmes."

He bowed courteously and left Forbes gasping for breath.

* * * * *

"It seems, Holmes," said Mellish, "that there is a new movement in the house. The recits—yes, I know we all used to look on them rather askance, but that old bigoted attitude is a thing of the past—a back number—bad form. Boys (enthusiastic creatures!)

are simply tumbling over each other to put their names down this year. You will not be backward in coming forward, I hope? May I put your name down for a contribution? I suggest 'Henry V. before Agincourt' as suitable to your style, you being colour-sergeant of the D.O.T.C. In fancy I can see Holmes stamping on the platform, 'Once more into the breach, dear friends!'"

"I've done mine for to-morrow, and it's a beastly stiff copy," pursued Mellish, pensively.

"Oh, I say—well, what is it you want?"

"I won't keep you to your promise about painting your nose green," said Mellish as he left. "Thanks, awfully. I'm going to see Talbot."

* * * * *

"Going in for the recits, Talbot?"

"Before I go in for those beastly recits," said Holmes, firmly, "I'll 'paint my nose green!"

"Can you?" said Holmes. "I can't."

"You don't mean to refuse, after my beautiful speech?"

"Before I go in for those beastly recits," said Holmes, firmly, "I'll paint my nose green."

Mellish sighed.

"Not even if I do your Iambics for a fortnight?" he breathed.

"Eh?" said Holmes. "Hang it, you know I can't do 'jambags' for nuts—that's hardly fair—but still——"

"Yes. Hi! Don't go! Where are you off to?"

"Carstairs." And the door closed.

* * * * *

"Going in for the recits?" asked Mellish.

"Not me," said Carstairs. "I've had some."

"So have we all," said Mellish, sitting down, for he knew it would be a long job to rope in Carstairs. "Yet we are not all faint-hearted. After a modest stand in the background for four years I am going in again. Mellish takes down the lance of his fathers once more and

re-enters the lists with a yell of defiance. Scott is going in to set a good example. Forbes is backing him up in the galvanisation of public spirit. Holmes has thrown in his lot with us, and Talbot—brave old Talbot—is still determined to make an effort for at least one pot to grace his sideboard. Will you join?"

"Not for a quid," said Carstairs. "You must think I'm a fool."

"I have a high opinion of your intellect," said Mellish. "But I think you are too modest. You might very likely bear away the prize. Think how pleased your people would be!"

"Think what an ass I should feel spouting poetry!" returned Carstairs, with scorn. "Poetry! Not much—not for a thousand pots."

"Not if I took call-over for you for a fortnight?" queried the tempter.

"Not for a term," said Carstairs, the inflexible.

"Not if I didn't row against you in the senior sculls?"

"Hang it, man! That's a gift for you! You mustn't do that."

"I'd do that and more if you'd enter for the recits."

"What's your *game*?" said Carstairs, suspiciously. "Let's hear."

"Will you enter if I scratch for the sculls?"

"No," said Carstairs, stoutly. "I don't want to win unless I'm the best man. I'm hanged if I enter!"

Mellish realised that here was an incorruptible man. He sighed, but tried fresh tactics. He told his story, and revealed his plan. When the tale was finished Carstairs laughed heartily.

"You *are* an ass!" he said. "However, it'll be rather a rag. Stick me down as a starter. What shall I recite?"

"Any rot you like," said Mellish. "Thanks, awfully. Now I must see Wilton."

* * * * *

By these and other methods Mellish, after working hard for ten days, achieved his object. Some he had to bribe, some persuade; a few such as Carstairs he had to let into the secret of his plan before they would consent to sacrifice themselves. With the juniors he adopted various lines. To some he developed the *esprit de corps* argument. Others he asked in a friendly fashion. "Not going in? Oh, all the best chaps are entering—better let me put you down." Flattery such as this few could resist, the more so because Mellish was a popular chap. Those of the juniors—the middle-weights, rather—who were insensible to the call of loyalty or to judicious "oiling," Mellish compelled *vi et armis*, or at least by a hint of such. These, one is glad to note, were few.

And so at the end of ten days every fellow in the house had entered for the recits. It was a record, a thing unheard of, incredible, but true. It made Scott's head buzz with pride as he took the house list up to the Head's study the day before the competition.

"You're a brick," he said, with dull gratitude, to Mellish that night after supper. "I never thought you were so keen on the house before. Pretty useful the whole lot of us going in as one man. Peter should be bucked." (Peter was the house master.) "I wonder what he'll say when he hears?"

"I wonder," said Mellish, with a curious smile. "Ought to be worth hearing."

Peter, it should be explained, did not know of the spirit that animated his house. He knew, of course, that coaching was going on as usual; but as the unofficial tutors were careful to coach only the compulsory candidates, as usual, the record entry had not come to his knowledge. "Let's give Peter and the other chaps a surprise," Mellish had suggested. "No use giving the other houses the tip, or they might copy us and spoil it. The word is, keep it dark."

So it was kept dark until the list went in. The Head found it in his study, where Scott had left it, after five o'clock. He took it up carelessly, to see how many of the bigger boys had entered. Then he started. He considered it carefully for a few minutes and then smiled, being a very human man. That night he sent a note over to Peter, asking him to come and smoke a pipe. Peter went.

"I say, Pollock," said the old man, after the pipes were lit, "do you know how many of your house have entered for the recitations?

"No," said Pollock. "But I expect as few as possible."

"Every single chap in your house has entered," said the old man, impressively.

"What!"

The old man repeated his statement.

"But that means forty-seven boys!" exclaimed Peter, amazed.

"Forty-seven," agreed the other.

"It will take about three hours to hear my house alone!" cried Pollock, grasping the situation.

"Exactly," said the old man, puffing at his

pipe. "In the vulgar tongue, Pollock, this is a put-up job. Someone has 'persuaded'—I like the word 'persuaded'—your house to go in *en masse*. I suppose the obvious intention is to force me to give up another afternoon to hear the recits."

"What will you do?" asked Pollock, who had great faith in the old man.

"One can't very well refuse the entries, as the recits are supposed to be voluntary. Oh, yes, I know the juniors *are* compelled to go in, and I am not quite sure that I ought to wink at it. Possibly in some future year I may take steps to prevent it, though at present I hardly see what I could do. But this year we must accept present conditions; it's too late to alter them, the night before the competition. On the other hand, we can't have the recits made a public mockery. We shall have to show the school that they must be treated seriously."

"What are you going to do?" asked Pollock, anxiously.

"Well, I fear it will cause some dissatisfaction, and will make your house temporarily unpopular. But we've got to stamp on this thing by legal means now or never. I propose——"

He told Pollock his proposal in a few short sentences, and Pollock smiled.

* * * * *

Once more Dipcote was assembled in the Big School to hear the annual recits. The fellows were all sitting quietly in their places, masters with their forms, to all outward appearance the same decorous audience as on past occasions. But below the surface secret fires were smouldering; a new spirit was abroad.

After dinner Mellish had thought it a propitious time to publish his scheme to a *blasé* world. The news that Pollock's house had entered *en bloc* was received with incredulity. When it was explained (to a select few) that Mellish's idea was to discredit the recits by pouring a stream of unflagging rhetoric into the ears of the bored judges, he was hailed as a master of organisation and imagination.

"But they won't let you all spout," objected one.

"Won't they?" said Mellish. "They must. It's a free country. They'll get so sick of it that one of two things will happen: either they'll chuck the recits next year, or they'll have to give up an extra day to hearing them. We score either way."

"You're a genius," said the objector, and Mellish smiled a little wearily.

The Head walked up to the platform with even step and unruffled countenance. Having reached the seat and desk from where he dominated the throng, he gave an epoch-making, though brief, speech.

"You will hear with pleasure," he said, calmly, "that the entry for this year's recitations is a record, the number of competitors being far in excess over any other year since the competition was instituted. One house in particular has distinguished itself by polling every vote—*Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci*—not one of that house is absent. I is most gratifying that such enthusiasm shoul be shown. Of course, the two hours at ou disposal will not be nearly enough to decide the competition; but since the school feeling in favour of the recitations is obviously so emphatic, I am sure you will not object to the devotion of two extra hours to such a good cause." He paused, and the school clapped appreciatively. The old man then added, "To-morrow afternoon." There was no clapping this time, but a dead silence. For the morrow was a Saturday.

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Results of Our Football and Stamp Competitions

OUR FOOTBALL COMPETITION

VERY great skill was displayed by many readers who entered for this competition, and the order in which the winning competitors are placed below was arrived at only after very careful consideration. It will be noticed that we are awarding a considerably larger number of prizes than was announced.

The following are the correct solutions:—

(1) Leyton; (2) Aston Villa; (3) London Scottish; (4) Blackburn Rovers; (5) Bury; (6) Clapton; (7) Queen's Park; (8) Oldham; (9) Sheffield Wednesday; (10) Civil Service; (11) Notts Forest; (12) London Hospital; (13) Reigate Priory; (14) Reading; (15) Newport; (16) Preston North End; (17) Bolton Wanderers; (18) Widnes; (19) United Services; (20) Blackheath; (21) Bacup; (22) West Norwood; (23) Bridgend; (24) Middlesbrough; (25) Old Kingstonians; (26) Stockport County; (27) Linfield.

Winner of First Prize

(A Magnificent Rudge-Whitworth Bicycle)

PERCY BOLTON, 108, NETHERWOOD ROAD, WEST KENSINGTON PARK, W.

Winner of Second Prize

(Goods to the value of Three Guineas from Messrs. A. W. Gamage, Ltd.)

BERNARD M. WALLIS, COMBS, STOWMARKET.

Winners of Cash Prizes of Five Shillings

(Specially awarded)

S. BACON, 142, Broomspring Lane, Sheffield; C. E. DOCKER, 7, Leipsic Road, Camberwell, S.E.; G. F. S. WELLS, 76, Haselrigge Road, Clapham, S.W.; CHARLES GREIG, 229, Brockley Road, Brockley, S.E.; ALFRED JAMES, 34, Hamfrith Road, Stratford, E.; C. WHITTLE, 8, Chandos Road, Tottenham, N.; J. UNDERWOOD, Caer-Glow, Druce Road, Dulwich, S.E.; C. H. YOUNG, Fairfield, Dunheved Road W., Thornton Heath.

Winners of Consolation Prizes

Spencer O. Branch, Marjorie Lea, Ernest Tillott, H. M. Lacey, F. S. Cooper, A. H. Const, Frederick T. Frampton, Bernard Hull, Elsie Lea, J. S. Bowden, E. Parker, Andrew Fraser, Cyril H. Burfield, K. L. Duck, Herbert Parker, Harold Percy, C. F. Hughes, F. C. Franklin, Carl Thurston, F. H. Baker, R. E. Clink, J. H. Thomas, C. E. Hind, Wilfrid R. Vowles, Angus Macmillan, A. H. Stubbs, H. A. Baskett, George D. Roberton, Sidney H. Jewitt, H. Clough, C. W. Moulton, A. R. Cartwright, Robert A. M. Dickson, Henry Harberd, Stuart E. Machin, A. Mackmin, A. R. N. Rooksby, G. W. Border, J. W. Jacquest, A. W. Humphreys.

OUR STAMP COMPETITION

OUR Philatelic Editor reports that the popularity of this competition exceeded even his most hopeful expectations, and in most cases the entries showed a remarkable degree of discernment and of philatelic knowledge on the part of our stamp-collecting readers. So high, indeed, was the standard attained by the best attempts that the final adjudication was a very difficult task, and the most minute shades of distinction had to be taken into consideration. After very careful thought and inspection, however, the winning attempts have been placed in the order in which they appear below, and prizes will be awarded accordingly.

The following are the correct solutions: (1) New South Wales; (2) France; (3) Peru; (4) British Guiana; (5) Würtemberg; (6) Spain; (7) Victoria; (8) Papal States, or Roman States, or States of the Church; (9) Argentina, or Argentine Federation; (10) Portuguese India; (11) Reunion; (12) Sicily; (13) Portugal; (14) Queensland; (15) Moldavia or Roumania; (16) Egypt; (17) Holland or Dutch Colonies; (18) Naples; (19) Switzerland; (20) Tuscany; (21) Trinidad; (22) Montevideo or Uruguay; (23) Spain; (24) Duttia; (25) Corrientes; (26) Transvaal; (27) Austria; (28) Baden; (29) India; (30) Parma; (31) Cundinamarca; (32) Sweden; (33) New South Wales; (34) Servia; (35) Brunswick; (36) Natal.

Winner of First Prize

(Goods to the value of Two Guineas from Messrs. Whitfield, King & Co.)

and of the Special Extra Prize

(Goods to the value of Three Guineas presented by Mr. L. S. Charlick)

T. A. BEAZLEY, 32a, Whitworth Road, Plumstead, S.E.

Winner of Second Prize

(Goods to the value of Thirty Shillings from Messrs. Errington & Martin)

W. A. KIRKBY, WINSTER HOUSE, THORNFIELD ROAD, HEATON MOOR, STOCKPORT.

Winner of Third Prize

(Goods to the value of One Guinea from Messrs. Bright & Son)

KATHLEEN M. SPIKINS, WARREN LODGE, KINGSTON HILL, S.W.

Winners of Consolation Prizes

(Goods from Messrs. Lawn & Barlow, the Midland Stamp Co., Mr. James Rhodes, Messrs. Hamilton & Co., the Empire Stamp Co., Mr. William Ward, Mr. F. G. Rowe, Mr. J. E. Lea, Messrs. Lightbown & Co., Mr. H. McCraight, and Mr. W. H. Peckitt)

G. Warner, Northdene, High Lane, near Stockport; Ralph G. Wheeler, Westholme, the Crescent, Maidenhead; H. C. Newton, 41, Church Road, Wimbledon; Horace J. Hopkins, Clifton Villa, the Avenue, St. Margarets-on-Thames; Godfrey Lupton, 37, Merchants Quay, Newry, Ireland; Richard Duke, 72, Mandeville Street, Walton, Liverpool; Eric de Banzie, 13, Murray Street, Maryhill, Glasgow; John Selwyn Dunn, Anglemede, Haslemere; W. Anderson, James Street, Cookstown; A. S. Bowyer, the Woodlands, Chelford, Cheshire; Laurance Barclay, Mossburn, Broughton Ferry, N.B.

SOUTHAMPTON STREET,
STRAND, LONDON.

The Cricket Season of 1912 is destined to be one of the most memorable in the annals of the game. The team which has acquitted itself so gloriously this winter in Australia will come back to the homeland only to renew the struggle under even more trying conditions. Having regained the "ashes"—in the face of as much ill-luck as any side could be expected to suffer—England will have to fight hard to retain them, not against one challenger only, but against two. For the first time Australia and South Africa will be over here together, each of them striving to conquer England and each other. I look forward to the results, from England's point of view, with every confidence. Warner's team—it is still "Warner's team," though poor "Plum" was denied the chance of playing in any single one of the most important matches—showed us that there is any amount of good stuff in the young men of English cricket, and it is always to the young men that we must look for the glories of the future. Douglas, Foster, Hearne, Hobbs, Woolley, Gunn, and Hitch have all before them, we hope, many long years in which to do battle for the Old Country, and by the time that they too join the ranks of the veterans, others will have arisen to do duty in their stead. I do not in any way wish to disparage the skill—and even more than that, the confidence begotten by participating in many a grim struggle—that our famous older men still can boast, but Fry, Jessop, Hirst, Hayward, Tyldesley, and Rhodes cannot, alas! go on for ever, and it is to the young blood that we must ever look for the continuance of our fair fame. It is not to be expected, of course, that the eleven who won their laurels in Australia will all be called upon for the Tests which will be played this summer, but the selectors will be wise ever to bear in mind their fine performances. They might easily seek farther and fare worse, for it cannot be denied, even by those who would like to see their old favourites in the field, that the "youngsters" have won their spurs in unmistakable style. But a few weeks now remain till the first ball is bowled, and—here's all good luck to our English team, and a hearty welcome to our cricketing cousins from over the seas!

The First Test Match will begin at Manchester on May 27th, when Australia and South Africa will fight the first fight in the series of nine. By that time the June CAPTAIN will have been published, and I can assure you all that you will then have very good reason to know that I am not letting this historical year pass without giving you something special in the way of cricket stories, articles, and features. My plans are not yet quite complete, so full particulars I cannot give you, though I have already essayed quite sufficient to make it certain that every cricket-loving boy in the United Kingdom will turn eagerly to this magazine. To start with, our cover for May will be a splendid picture in colours of F. R. Foster, the young amateur who played the greatest part in wresting back the "ashes" held in trust for Australia by Clem Hill, Trumper & Co. This fine portrait, which will be specially drawn in colours for THE CAPTAIN by T. M. R. Whitwell, will certainly make

one of the most effective covers we have ever produced. Mr. F. R. Foster is the idol of our young cricketers to-day, and many are the letters I have received asking me to publish a portrait of him. Next month I think you will all admit that I have responded to this request in the best possible way.

The Prince at Oxford.—The announcement that H.R.H. the Prince of Wales is to go to Magdalen College, Oxford, is one of great interest. No college in the world can claim a finer history than Magdalen. Founded by William Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester, in 1458, it has counted among its members such glorious names as Latimer, John Hampden, Addison, and Gibbon. It stands on the banks of the Cherwell, and is surrounded by the Magdalen water-meadows, and its fine old quadrangle, cloisters, hall, and chapel are superb examples of fifteenth century architecture. On the top of the tower every May Day the choir sing a Latin hymn, a custom founded, it is believed, by Cardinal Wolsey. A more fitting college than Magdalen could not have been chosen for the young prince. A photograph of Magdalen, showing the bridge, is reproduced on this page, and opposite is one of the latest, and certainly one of the finest, portraits of His Royal Highness.

The Boat Race.—When this number of THE CAPTAIN is in your hands Boat Race fever will be at its height, for the great event will be but a few days off. From all reports that have come to hand concerning the practice spins there is every indication that this year's race will provide a close finish. This is the fifty-seventh year in which the race has been rowed from Putney to Mortlake, and during that time many exciting incidents have occurred in its progress. Let us hope that this year no such misfortune will overtake the Cambridge crew as they suffered in 1859, when, owing to the boisterous state of the weather, their boat was swamped, and eventually sank. The Light Blues kept on rowing to the last

Magdalen, the most famous and most beautiful college at Oxford, where the Prince of Wales will shortly go into residence.

H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, K.G., who on the 23rd of June enters his nineteenth year. The announcement that, like King Edward, he is to "go up" to Oxford has aroused most widespread interest.

Photo, W. D. Downey.

possible minute, even till their craft went down beneath them, and their oars were floating on the water as they pulled. Oxford managed to finish the course without actually sinking, though their "ship" was full of water.

Nor will Oxford, we pray, experience such cruel misfortune as dogged them in 1877, when, comfortably leading and but a thousand yards from home, one of their men smashed an oar. It might well be imagined that after such a mishap the whole crew would have gone to pieces, but not so these dauntless Oxford men. Rowing desperately hard with seven blades only, they tried their utmost to stave off the Cambridge challenge, but the handicap was too much for them. They could not pass the post a winning crew, but they were successful in staving off defeat. So gallantly had they bent to their work in face of such heavy odds that Cambridge could only just draw level, and the result was a dead heat. Oxford or Cambridge, let the conditions be fair and the luck equal, and may the best crew win!

R. C. Bourne stroking the Oxford crew, who have been in strict training since February 21st, in a trial spin. Oxford enthusiasts are anticipating that "President" Bourne will lead the eight to victory in the great race, as he did last year.

Photo, Sport & General.

School Magazines.—My best thanks are due to the editors of the following magazines of which I have received copies: *Allhallows School Magazine, The Barrovian, City of London School Magazine, The Dartfordian, The Droghedean, Foyle College Magazine, Glasgow High School Magazine, The Haileyburian, The Hurst Johnian, The Ipswich School Magazine, The Leys Fortnightly, The Malvernian, The Mill Hill Magazine, The Olicanian, The Portmuthian, The Quernmorian, The Salopian, The Scindian, The Sedberghian, S. M. A. School Magazine, The Tollingtonian, The Tonbridgian, The Wyvern.*

I follow the progress of these productions with much interest, and am always pleased to receive the copy which editors are good enough to send me.

Answers to Correspondents

STAMPS

S. G. C. (Norwood).—(1) Your Wuhu stamp (returned by post) is a Chinese local, and should go under "China," if inserted in the album at all. (2) As a general rule you will detect watermarks readily enough by placing the stamp face downwards on an intense black surface, such as the black cover sometimes supplied on note-books and copy-books. A special "watermark detector" is sold at 6d. by many stamp-dealing firms.

A. C. L. (Hampstead).—(1) Only rare stamps, as a rule, are readily saleable at full catalogue price, though sometimes a comparatively common stamp, if a brilliant specimen, and perfect in every possible way, will make "full catalogue." It is impossible to lay down any hard and fast rule about stamp values. (2) The Sarawak stamps you send, and which I have returned by post, were wisely bought at the price, and should prove a good investment.

M. M. (Mitcham Common).—(1) Yes; the Hamburg postmarks have been very extensively forged. (2) The leading work on forged stamps is "Album Weeds," by Rev. E. B. Earée, published in two volumes by Messrs. Stanley Gibbons, Limited.

"Helix" (Kendal).—(1) No; the 3kr., Bavaria, with "broken circle" is comparatively quite

common. It is the 6 kreuzer with this variety that is scarce. (2) Yes, Norway by all means. An excellent choice for an essay in specialism.

W. E. N. H. W. (Dartmouth).—(1) There are doubtless many varieties of the "Republica" overprints on Portugal and colonies. (2) The difference between Dies I. and II. of the 1*d.* King Edward stamp of Southern Nigeria is to be found in the expression of value "1*d.*" at the head of the stamp. The "1" in Die I. is thicker than in Die II., while the letter "D" is smaller and narrower in the first die than in the second. (3) The Indian stamps surcharged "Postal Service" are not used as postage stamps at all.

E. A. I. (Sheffield).—A dealer's name on the back of a stamp may mean little or much. It depends on the dealer. If the name is that of a trader of high repute and has been placed on the back of the stamp as a guarantee of genuineness, then it enhances rather than reduces the value of the stamp. I have written you by post on other matters.

N. F. (Cape Town).—(1) There is no hard-and-fast rule for distinguishing stamps post-marked to order from genuinely used specimens. Usually the former are detected by the spick-and-span appearance of the post-mark, which is applied very clearly, but yet in such a way as not to rob the specimen of its attractiveness. (2) Yes, yours is quite a sound scheme for a general collection. Continue on these lines till you have a thorough general knowledge of stamps, and then launch out as a specialist of some simple, straightforward country.

GENERAL

Lacrosslte.—In spite of the many attempts that have been made to increase its popularity, I fear that lacrosse is fated to appeal only to a very small band of enthusiasts. After a long trial the game has now been abandoned even by the Leys School, and this will naturally have a bad effect on the Cambridge lacrosse team. I fear that articles on the game would not be appreciated by many Captainites, though you will find that we published one in our February number last year.

Cutlet.—There are certain preliminary qualifications that a prospective naval surgeon must possess before he may sit for the examination, and information as to these can be obtained from the Director-General of the Naval Medical Department, Admiralty, Whitehall, S.W. The examination, which occupies four days, is held in London, and the age limits are twenty-one and twenty-eight. The pay commences at £255 10*s.* per annum, and ultimately reaches, if the recommendations needed at various stages are secured, £657, beyond which there are a few appointments commanding higher pay.

H. F. L.—(1) The examination for Writers in the Royal Navy is not at all severe. The chief subjects are English composition, spelling, and handwriting, and commercial arithmetic, while additional marks can also be secured for shorthand, typewriting, and general intelligence. (2) The age limits are eighteen and twenty-three. (3) The work of a Writer comprises clerical duties of all kinds under the paymaster on board ship. (4) The pay commences at 14*s.* per week, plus rations and accommodation, and rises to 38*s.* 6*d.* per week, while it is now possible for Writers to attain warrant rank, with higher pay.

C. R. (Canada).—You send no joke with your drawing, but we gather that it is intended to be comic. As you also send no address we cannot return it, and therefore "Bask" has devoured it.

F. J. A.—Glad you think THE CAPTAIN prizes are worth winning, and found the football competition so interesting. Perhaps we shall have another picture puzzle competition soon, as you and many other Captainites seem to wish it. Would you not like to start a branch of the Captain Club in Bowes Park, and emulate the example of the Cardiff branch which you mention?

"A Convert" (Birmingham).—If you have no room to retreat a good method of getting away is by side-stepping. For instance, supposing

Many changes in the constitution of the Cambridge crew took place right up to the beginning of March. But the eight that have now been selected are thought by many experts to have a very good chance of reversing the result of last year's struggle from Putney to Mortlake. Our photo shows them "getting fit" on the Cam.

your opponent hits with his left, instead of ducking you step out to the right with your left foot so that his left passes over your left shoulder; or, if the blow is aimed at your body, past your left side. As soon as the blow has missed its mark you can step forward again. Side-stepping is very useful when your opponent is hitting too low for you to avoid his blows by ducking; but it is generally much easier to side-step a left-hander than a right-hander.

W. D. R. (Didsbury).—I echo in every particular your sentiments regarding Mr. Frank Foster; but all the same I fear your poem upon him would not bear the fierce light of criticism that beats about CAPTAIN contributions. You will be delighted to know that next month's cover will consist of a splendid portrait in colours of your cricketing hero. "Harold's First Term," like the ode to Warwickshire's captain, also failed to pass, though it certainly drew honourable mention. Thanks for the bowling and batting statistics you sent me. I am glad to see that you are such a keen young sportsman.

L. L. Girard (Vanves, Paris).—Many thanks for your report of the Rugby match between the Lycée Michelet and Dulwich College. The result was a drawn match of 20 points a side, though the French boys got over the line six times to the Dulwich four. But as a French writer puts it, none of the home team had "*la maîtrise de Shand dans l'art de faire les buts*," for while all the Dulwich tries were converted, the Lycée Michelet could only once score the maximum points. My correspondent says that it was the first match between English and French school teams, and it was so successful that it will certainly not be the last. He also tells me THE CAPTAIN is becoming more and more popular among the boys of the French public schools.

Acknowledgments and thanks are also due to "Public School," F. J. Andrews, "Cantab," E. G. Cooper, C. Rogers, "Lacrossite," and others.

What does your friend think of "The Captain"?

Have you a friend who does not read THE CAPTAIN?

If so, there is an excellent opportunity for him now to win

A Prize Value One Guinea

(Goods to this amount being chosen from the catalogue of any firm advertising in THE CAPTAIN.)

And you can win a prize of the same amount, too.

That's something to tell him, isn't it? A guinea's-worth of goods for each of you.

What you have to do is to lend him this April number of THE CAPTAIN, and when he has read it right through to ask him to write down which he considers the best feature (serial, short story, or article), and why.

You will then write at the end of his criticism, first, your own name and address, then your friend's name and address, and direct the attempt to "Criticism Competition," THE CAPTAIN, 8, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.

Twenty Consolation Prizes will also be awarded.
Ten to Captainites, and Ten to their Friends.

Important Points to Remember.—It must be clearly understood that the friend whom you get to write this criticism must not have been a regular reader of THE CAPTAIN. All entries must reach these offices not later than Wednesday, April 24, and must be accompanied by the Competition Coupon cut from the Prizes Page, to be found in the advertisement section of this number. The editor's decision must be accepted as final.

There's a Guinea for Him and a Guinea for You!

THE
CAPTAIN
—
1911-12.